

THE CONCEPT OF NATURAL THEOLOGY IN THE GIFFORD LECTURES

A Thesis

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P R E F A C E

When, nearly half a century ago, the Croall Trustees invited W.L.Davidson to deliver the twentieth series of Croall Lectures, they invited him to sum up, as far as this was possible, the contribution made by Gifford Lecturers to the study of Theism. Davidson's book, Recent Theistic Discussion, was published in 1921. Since then no further attempt has been made to assess the total Gifford contribution to Natural Theology. In the light of the renewed interest in the subject it seemed appropriate to attempt such a survey.

There did not appear to be a complete list of published works in any form. The annotated bibliography in Appendix 3 fills this gap and the thesis itself is an attempt to assess the contribution of Gifford lecturers to our understanding of Natural Theology and its present function. Since the work was begun John MacQuarrie's Twentieth-Century Religious Thought has appeared (1963) and although its scope and intention are different the fact that Gifford lecturers and their lectures find such frequent mention is further evidence, if it were needed, of our indebtedness to Lord Gifford and his lecturers.

B.E.J.

THE CONCEPT OF NATURAL THEOLOGY IN THE GIFFORD LECTURES

	Preface	ii
	Bibliography of Gifford Lectures	iv
	Introduction	1
<u>PART ONE</u>	<u>A SURVEY OF THE GIFFORD LITERATURE</u>	32
Chapter 1	Lord Gifford's Will and Its Interpretation	32
Chapter 2	The Scientific Study of Religion	52
Chapter 3	Metaphysical Ventures	73
Chapter 4	Natural Theology, Science and Cosmology	105
Chapter 5	The Wider Scope of Natural Theology	129
Chapter 6	From Goodness to God	136
Chapter 7	Defenders of Faith	152
Chapter 8	The Historical Approach to Natural Theology	183
Chapter 9	Some Conclusions	193
<u>PART TWO</u>	<u>THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATURAL THEOLOGY</u>	202
Chapter 1	Natural Theology as the Critic of Religion	202
Chapter 2	Natural Theology as Apologetic	233
Chapter 3	Natural Theology and Metaphysics	277
Chapter 4	Natural Theology as the Ally of Faith	315
Chapter 5	Natural Theology and Mystical Insight	352
<u>PART THREE</u>	<u>NATURAL THEOLOGY TODAY</u>	397
Chapter 1	Lord Gifford's Intention	397
Chapter 2	The Barthian Veto	405
Chapter 3	Philosophy and Faith	443
Chapter 4	The Future of Natural Theology	461
<u>APPENDICES</u>		
1	The Text of Lord Gifford's Will	476
2	Lists of Gifford Lecturers at the four Universities	483
3	Annotated Bibliography of Published Lectures and Subjects of Unpublished Lectures	489
4	Supplementary Bibliography	528

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

1. The Sick Man of Europe	page 2
2. Two Ways to God	3
3. The Philosophical Challenge to Natural Theology	11
4. Natural Theology Persistent	13
5. The Nineteenth Century	17
6. Natural Science and God	20
7. Other Factors	24
8. Drawing the Threads Together	27
References	28

1. The Sick Man of Europe

In one of the many recent books dealing with the philosophical approach to theology Natural Theology is described as the Sick Man of Europe¹. It has been further suggested that it might be the kindest thing to let him die quietly². The patient however is an unconscionable long time a-dying and indeed shows remarkable powers of resistance and recovery. Some think he will never be fit enough for his previous employment but may recover sufficiently to take on a less onerous task. Others seem to think he will have a better chance of employment if he changes his name or at least the description of his trade. Owing to the generosity of Lord Gifford well over a hundred specialists have been called in during the past seventy seven years with the express purpose of giving their attention to natural theology in the widest sense of the term. Only one of these specialists, namely Karl Barth, has been prepared unreservedly to sign a death certificate. Some of the specialists, it must be admitted, have walked round the ward and scarcely noticed the patient. Most however have given the careful consideration that the case merits. It is our purpose to examine the reports given in the published Gifford lectures, to assess the present state of natural theology and, if possible, to offer a prognosis. Since the time of the Reformation itching fingers have been stretching for the bell-rope to toll the death knell of natural theology. It was then that the disease became apparent and it may be useful initially to glance briefly at the case history so that we can understand what led Lord Gifford to seek further opinions and call in the specialists.

2. Two Ways to God

Any enquiry into natural theology must begin on the Areopagus for here we have the first confrontation, of which we have a clear account, of that philosophy which claims that the knowledge of God is within the purview of human reason and that religion which claims that God can only be known fully by divine revelation. When St. Paul addressed the Council of the Areopagus³ he appears to have thought that his message was complementary to the knowledge of religious truth enjoyed by the Athenians rather than diametrically opposed to it. Similarly in his letter to the Roman church⁴ he recognised that there was a knowledge of God available to the gentiles even though they might not avail themselves of it. St. Paul tells us that their reasoning led them astray. "They did not see fit to acknowledge God"⁵ and so God allowed them to go their own way. Thus the opportunity of knowing God had been given to Jews and gentiles and they would be judged according to their response. Not all the gentiles had failed to know God, limited though their knowledge might be, and as the early Christian fathers turned to the Greek writers they found that some of their philosophers had discovered truths about God which could not be dismissed as idle pagan speculation. It is quite understandable that there should grow up the idea that just as Christianity was the fulfilment of the Jewish faith so also it was the completion of Greek philosophy. There were others, like Tertullian, who could not accept that there was any connecting link between Athens

and Jerusalem, but on the whole the view that there are two ways of knowing God prevailed. Finally St. Thomas provided a philosophy and a theology which embraced these two approaches to God and established a principle which is still maintained by Roman Catholic theologians.

The first kind of knowledge of God is either self-evident or demonstrable from self-evident facts. Such knowledge gives certainty of the existence of God. The second kind of knowledge is not demonstrable. For Aquinas it depended upon faith informed by revelation, yet what we thus hold to be divinely revealed is never contrary to our natural knowledge⁶. These truths are not accessible to unaided human reason, but nevertheless

" it is useful for the human reason to exercise itself in such arguments, however weak they may be, provided only that they present no presumption to comprehend or to demonstrate. For to be able to see something of the loftiest realities, however thin and weak the sight may be, is, as our previous remarks indicate, a cause of greatest joy."⁷

It appears then that this second kind of knowledge is an extension of the first. In other words, some truths about God can be reached by natural reason while other truths, for instance, the doctrine of the Trinity, can only be known as proposed by God for man's acceptance. There is, for Aquinas, no unnatural break between the two kinds of knowledge. Indeed the man of less intellectual ability may have to travel the whole way by faith, accepting the truths of reason and revelation alike by faith,

because he is incapable of reasoning his way through the first stages. On the other hand the intellectual may enter the realm of revealed truth and revel in it providing there is no presumption to comprehend or demonstrate.

St. Thomas recognised that through the poverty of man's intellect "the truth about God such as reason could discover, would only be known by a few and that after a long time, and with the admixture of many errors,"⁸ but he did not regard the achievement of this knowledge as an utter impossibility. He believed that man's knowledge of God had been impaired by the Fall but not rendered void. God's Essence can only be known in heaven, according to Aquinas, and man's knowledge of God before the Fall was something between his present knowledge and the perfect knowledge in heaven.⁹ It should be added that Aquinas described a third kind of knowledge of God, "by which the human mind will be elevated to gaze perfectly on the things revealed"¹⁰, but this direct vision of God is vouchsafed to the rare soul in this life and to the redeemed in heaven.

Both Luther and Calvin agreed with St. Thomas in declaring that there are two kinds of knowledge of God. For the reformers, however, there is a clear break between the two kinds of knowledge. Indeed the second kind of knowledge might be better described as "saving knowledge" for any intellectual truth about God it conveys is incidental to the knowledge of salvation. This second kind of knowledge comes through faith and efforts to reach God any

other way are attempts to find salvation through works. Luther writes :

" There is a double knowledge of God : general and particular. All men have the general knowledge, namely that there is a God, that he created heaven and earth, that he is just, that he punisheth the wicked. But what God thinketh of us, what his will is towards us, what he will give or what he will do, to the end that we may be delivered from sin and death, and be saved, (which is true knowledge of God indeed,) this they know not."¹¹

Luther draws the parallel between knowing about a man and having direct knowledge of the man himself. It is possible to know a lot about God without knowing God himself. This knowledge of God himself can only come through Christ.

" Without Christ there is nothing else but mere idolatry, an idle and false imagination of God, whether it be called Moses' law, or the Pope's ordinances, or the Turk's Alcoran."¹²

The general knowledge, available to all men, is the source of idolatry, for the knowledge that God is led to vain imaginings concerning his nature¹³. Any natural theology runs the risk of emerging as idolatry.

For Aquinas no such risk is involved. Intellect is a gift of God and provides a reliable way to at least partial knowledge of God. Partial it may be but as far as it goes it is genuine knowledge of God. It is perhaps because Luther's second kind of

knowledge gives such immediacy of experience that the general knowledge seems vain and empty by contrast. This immediacy is lacking in the second kind of knowledge of St. Thomas. Indeed in some ways Luther's second kind of knowledge is akin to Aquinas's third kind, the direct vision. Faith, for Luther, is far more than the acceptance of truth about God on the authority of revelation; it is the direct acceptance of grace. Thus natural theology has little place in Luther's thought. When a man stands in need of salvation

" there is nothing more dangerous than to wander with curious speculations in heaven, and there to search out God in his incomprehensible power, wisdom and majesty, how he createth the world, and how he governeth it. If thou seek thus to comprehend God, and wouldest pacify him without Christ the Mediator, making thy works a means between him and thyself, it cannot be but thou must fall as Lucifer did, and in horrible despair lose God and all together. For as God is in his own nature unmeasurable, incomprehensible, and infinite, so he is to man's nature intolerable."¹⁴

It is interesting to note that these negative attributes of God belong to the thought of Athens rather than Jerusalem. Luther did not recognise the debt but saw natural theology as a snare and delusion, utterly incapable of leading a man to true knowledge of God. In spite of the lip-service paid to the general knowledge of God, reason is described elsewhere as a harlot, or, as a variant,

Luther tells us that "Philosophy is an old woman that stinks of Greece"¹⁵. For the reformers the Fall rendered man's general knowledge of God almost worthless.

We find a similar ambivalent attitude towards natural theology in Calvin's thought. On the one hand there is a knowledge of God available to natural reason, but on the other hand such knowledge is virtually useless to man as a result of the Fall. Because of his palsied limbs man is unable to reach beyond the first rung of the ladder, yet because the ladder is there he is under judgment for not climbing it!

" That there exists in the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, some sense of Deity, we hold to be beyond dispute, since God himself, to prevent any man from pretending ignorance, has endued all men with some idea of his Godhead, the memory of which he constantly renews and occasionally enlarges, that all to a man being aware that there is a God, and that he is their Maker, may be condemned by their own conscience when they neither worship him nor consecrate their lives to his service."¹⁶

Even if a man is fortunate enough to reach the first rung he has no hope of reaching the top. So Calvin continues :

" Though experience testifies that a seed of religion is divinely sown in all, scarcely one in a hundred is found who cherishes it in his heart, and not one in whom it grows to maturity." ¹⁷

The worship such men offer is unacceptable to God for they are not worshipping the true God but "the dream and figment of their own heart"¹⁸. True knowledge of God can only come through the Word of God himself and not through man's striving, however well intentioned.

Richard Kroner in his Gifford lectures contrasted the solutions proposed by Catholics and Protestants to the problem posed by the dual knowledge of God in this way :

" While mediaeval catholicism had brought about a system in which nature and grace, world and God, reason and revelation, were integral parts, supplementing each other, so that the whole was in perfect equilibrium in spite of the gap between the parts, Protestantism stressed the fact of the gap. While the catholic system reconciled the oppositions by means of a hierarchy which mediated between the lowest and the highest spheres in accordance with the neoplatonic type of philosophy, Protestantism emphasized the mission of God's word and of Christ as the only mediator between God and man, and thus generated the Kantian type of philosophy."¹⁹

Natural theology was to be assailed later by Hume and Kant on the grounds of the sheer inability of reason to deal with the question of Divine Being, but this earlier attack is directed against reason as corrupt because of its contamination by pride. For the reformers natural theology can neither help in leading

man towards a knowledge of God nor is it possible to look to natural theology to support a theological position already established by faith. It remained for Barth to give this view its extreme expression. In his view the Fall rendered man utterly incapable of doing anything for himself; the impotence of reason even to consider the question of God is complete.

Eventually the Reformation reached Scotland and the Confessio Scotica was proclaimed by John Knox, affirming faith in the

" one God, to whom only we must cleave, whom one God we must serve, whom one God we must worship, and in whom one God we must put our trust,"²⁰

and asserting that the word of God needs no external support from reason or any other authority.

" As we believe and confesse the Scriptures of God sufficient to instruct and make the man of God perfect, so do we affirm and avow the authority of the same to be of God, and nether to depend on men nor angelis."²¹

Religion thus depends entirely upon faith. The truths of religion are embedded in holy scripture which needs no confirmation from natural theology. There were still two kinds of knowledge of God, that which could be obtained from scripture and that other knowledge of God which came through the experience of salvation. There was no place for any knowledge of God which was the product of human reasoning. In support of this position there arose from the country of John Knox the strangest of allies, who would demonstrate on other grounds the ineffectuality of natural theology.

3. The Philosophical Challenge to Natural Theology

In the Dialogues concerning Natural Religion, David Hume, through the person of Philo, points out the weaknesses of the traditional theistic arguments and concludes that if a man is to have a firm foundation for his religion it must be grounded in faith supported by divine revelation. In the absence of any convincing proof of the existence or non-existence of God this is the only possible source of enlightenment. The Deists had been mistaken in thinking that they could arrive at a religious faith through philosophy. Scepticism is a prerequisite of faith. In the well known passage Philo says :

" A person, seasoned with a just sense of the imperfections of natural reason, will fly to revealed truth with the greatest avidity: while the haughty Dogmatist, persuaded that he can erect a complete system of Theology, by the mere help of philosophy, disdains any further aid, and rejects this adventitious instructor. To be a philosophical Sceptic is, in a man of letters, the first and most essential step, towards being a sound, believing Christian."²²

Neither John Knox nor Karl Barth could desire more definite support than this. Hume declares that neither belief in God nor the idea of immortality can be supported on rational grounds, but only by appeal to the revelatory truth afforded by Christianity. Otto Pfleiderer, an early Gifford lecturer, wrote of Hume :

" By his logical criticism he has destroyed the

self-sufficient dogmatism of the period of rationalistic enlightenment, whose half-criticism was neither just to faith nor to knowledge, because it imagined it had exhausted all reason in its narrow intellectual conceptions, and had no sense or comprehension for the unconscious reason of the religious feelings and symbols, or for the development of reason in the history of religion."²³

Pfleiderer remarks that after Hume it was impossible any longer to speak of "natural religion" in quite the same way. He had destroyed for ever the illusion that there had been a religion, common to all men, based on a few simple truths of reason. Similarly natural theology would never regain its earlier authority.

Kant tells us he was awakened out of his dogmatic slumbers by Hume. Like Hume, he claimed that, in abolishing knowledge in religious matters, he was making room for faith.²⁴ He claimed to be doing real service to morality and religion in silencing objectors by the Socratic method of proving their ignorance.²⁵ It is impossible to reach knowledge of things beyond this world on the basis of data presented by our empirical world, and so no rational knowledge of God is possible. Like Hume, Kant left the way open for faith, but where Hume left his puzzled reader to find his own way to revealed truth, Kant offered the alternative of a rational "faith", described as "the moral faith of reason". In matters of religion the practical reason is superior to the intellect and God is the postulate of pure practical reason.

Ethico-theology thus replaces natural theology. It is doubtful, however, whether the religion proposed by Kant is any more satisfying than that of the Deists.

Eighteenth century rationalism produced an attenuated religion. Philosophers were so concerned that they should be reasonable that they could not recognise that the data of religious experience was relevant to their quest.

" Thus it could come about," wrote William Temple, "that David Hume should compose his Dialogues on Natural Religion so cogent in argumentation, so urbane, so devastatingly polite, at a moment when John Wesley was altering the characters of thousands and the course of English History by preaching salvation through the precious Blood - a theme which one suspects that Hume and his friends would have thought ill-suited for refined conversation."²⁶

One might add that while Kant was developing his moral argument for the existence of God the followers of Wesley were singing of Christian holiness and finding an exuberant joy in religion somewhat different from the intellectual calm enjoyed by those who found their religion within the limits of mere reason.

4. Natural Theology Persistent

Natural theology withstood the attacks of the Reformers and, as we shall see, survived the onslaught of Hume and Kant. The conviction that natural theology could support the findings of faith was not to be lightly set aside. Descartes, a Roman

Catholic, Leibniz, a Lutheran and Locke a nominal Anglican all believed that it was possible to support religious beliefs by means of philosophical argument. The traditional arguments of the school men took new shape under their hands. As far as the faithful were concerned Descartes recognised that they would accept the truth of Christianity because it was taught in sacred scripture. He also recognised that the argument from scripture for the existence of God was circular, so that if any apologetic was to be addressed to the infidel it must be based on reason.²⁷ If the unbeliever can be taken so far by natural reason he may well finally accept the authority of scripture for those truths not accessible to reason. Here we see the shadow of Aquinas.

In England Francis Bacon had described natural theology as "that knowledge or rudiment of knowledge concerning God, which may be obtained by the contemplation of His creatures".²⁸ There was further knowledge, of course, to be accepted through revelation. Similarly Hobbes recognised that man had indeed reached religious truths through reason but that God had planted further truths by divine revelation.²⁹ Locke made the extremely tidy analysis of propositions, distinguishing those according to reason, those above reason and those contrary to reason.³⁰ No religion, one would think, would ask a believer to accept a proposition completely disproved by reason. On the other hand a proposition clearly demonstrated by reason does not need the

authority of faith. The category of the suprarational is the most pertinent. Truths in this category we accept by faith, which is, according to Locke,

" the assent to any proposition, not . . . made out by the deductions of reason, but upon the credit of the proposer, as coming from God in some extraordinary way of communication. This way of discovering truths to men we call revelation."³¹

There must, however, be "good reason" for anything we accept by faith³² and we must be able to distinguish between the delusions of Satan and the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. The reasonableness of propositions thus accepted by faith turns on the credit of the proposer. In the gospel accounts the proposer is Jesus of Nazareth and his credit appears to depend on the fulfilment of prophecies and the performance of miracles. Locke does not pursue the question of the credit of those who wrote the accounts of the prophecy fulfilments and the miracles. This way of thinking proved unsatisfactory to Locke's successors who preferred to dispense entirely with the concept of revelation and who believed that the dogmas of universal religion could be reached by man's unaided reason.

Spinoza had specified the details of such an universal faith, whose principles were also the fundamental dogmas of scripture :

" There is a Supreme Being, who delights in Justice and Mercy, whom all who would be saved are bound to obey, and whose worship consists in the practice of justice and

and charity towards our neighbour."³³

Spinoza believed that scripture should be examined in the light of reason and any alleged revelation must be judged by reason. The lack of reason is no recommendation for scriptural or any other kind of truth. He exclaims :

" Men who contemn reason and reject understanding are strangely believed to be possessed of heavenly light!"³⁴

He criticises Christian thinkers for their attitude to holy scripture on two counts. In the first place, he says,

" I have found them giving utterance to nothing but Aristotelian and Platonic speculations, artfully dressed up and cunningly accommodated to Holy Writ."³⁵

And further,

" A conclusion that further appears . . . that they mostly assume as the basis of all inquiry into the true meaning of the Bible, that it is everywhere inspired and literally true."³⁶

The one obstacle which will prevent the Christian thinker from grasping the truth is, quite simply,

" the idea that Reason should be subordinate to Theology."³⁷

The prophets were only different from other folk in that through vivid imagination they were able to grasp truths beyond the reach of lesser men,³⁸ and the certainty that came to them was moral rather than mathematical.³⁹

Lord Gifford was a great admirer of Spinoza and one can readily understand his desire to follow the clues given by Spinoza

and to discover how much we can really know about God without resort to special revelation. The answer provided by the Deists was barren and cold. Theirs was a purely intellectual knowledge of God. From the knowledge of God described by Spinoza as intuition⁴⁰ there arises, so he tells us, the highest possible peace of mind and joy⁴¹. This is the intellectual love which gives a "felt" knowledge of God, on which Lord Gifford was to lay so much stress. If Hume and Kant were right there was little or no prospect for a religion based on demonstrative proof. An authoritarian religion had no appeal for Lord Gifford. Undoubtedly he hoped that there would emerge from the studies he proposed a religion, based, like Spinoza's, on intuitive knowledge of God, or, as Lord Gifford preferred to put it, on a true and felt knowledge of God.

5. The Nineteenth Century

Lord Gifford was born in 1820, at the end of a half century that had seen the deaths of Hume, Wesley and Kant, and if we follow the fortunes of natural theology in the nineteenth century, we shall discover some of the influences that led to his desire to establish the Gifford lectureships.

Continental philosophy was dominated by Hegel, whose influence extended to Britain in the latter part of the century. Hegel had produced a new solution to the problem raised by Kant. Where Kant had declared that thought was incapable of grasping reality, Hegel saw thought as the only reality known to us. For Hegel subject and object are not separate entities but

integral parts of one whole. Hegel re-established the possibility of metaphysical speculation. In reviving the ontological argument he demonstrated the possibility of reaching knowledge of reality through thought. His philosophy provided a neat scheme within which he could set Christianity as the absolute religion. According to Hegel Jewish religion stressed the transcendence of God; Greek philosophy emphasised immanence; Christianity, through the doctrine of the Trinity, recognises that God is neither beyond the world nor simply all-pervading within the world. Again there is a threefold development of the spirit. First, there was simple faith; this was followed by the destructive criticism of the Enlightenment; finally there is the constructive attitude of speculative philosophy. In some respects Hegel's thought represents a flight from faith to reason. Others might describe it as an advance from theology to philosophy. "It is a titanic undertaking to conquer the heavenly sphere by human thought," wrote Richard Kroner⁴². In this lay the appeal of Hegelianism to the nineteenth century, a century which saw so many triumphs of the human intellect. The attempt to find a speculative philosophy, which would do justice to the findings of science yet within which the Christian faith might find expression, continued into the twentieth century. John Watson wrote in 1912 :

" Nothing but a philosophical reconstruction of belief, which shall reconcile reason and religion, can lift us, in these days of unrest and unbelief, above the fatal division of the heart and the head." ⁴³

Metaphysical speculation was later to fall into disrepute, but while there is religious faith it will be necessary to find some way of thinking about religion in the context of contemporary scientific knowledge. This has been essayed by a number of Gifford lecturers and in our own day the wide interest shown in the work of a thinker like Teilhard de Chardin is evidence of man's constant desire to set his faith in the context of a total system.

If Hegel's philosophy stands as symbol of the emphasis on the head in nineteenth century religious thought, then Schleiermacher's thought is symbolic of the emphasis on the heart. For Locke and the Deists as for Kant and Hegel religion was a matter of intellectual belief and moral conviction. One can discern little of the living faith of Luther or the mystics in this type of natural theology. Even within protestantism the dogmatic authority of scripture was substituted for the authority of the church, leading to another kind of formalism. Schleiermacher, who has been described as the founder of modern theology, reasserted the importance of the affective element in religion. Although he disclaims Spinozism as such he is in the line of succession to Spinoza. In his Speeches on Religion⁴⁴ he offers a tribute of almost unqualified admiration, a tribute that Lord Gifford would have endorsed without reservation. Where other apologists for religion had been content to show the plausibility of religious propositions Schleiermacher sought to show to its cultured despisers the real nature of religion. He writes :

" The usual conception of God as one single being outside the world and behind the world is not the beginning and end of religion. It is only one manner of expressing God, seldom entirely always pure and always inadequate. . . The true nature of religion is . . . immediate consciousness of the Deity as He is found in ourselves and in the world."⁴⁵

In this description of religion we can see the foreshadowings of later religious existentialism, and in his Christian Faith⁴⁶, Schleiermacher anticipates more recent writers in his treatment of the historical element in Christianity. He helps his readers to distinguish between factual historical statements and religious truths and shows that among all the arguments for the existence of God the argument from religious experience is not the weakest. Schleiermacher and his successors thus provide yet another strand of nineteenth century religious thought. But in England of the nineteenth century the name of Paley was much more familiar than that of Schleiermacher or even Hegel.

6. Natural Science and God

At the opening of the century the assiduous Archdeacon Paley, undaunted by Hume and Kant, was busily engaged in drawing implications from the hypothetical discovery of the proverbial watch! His Natural Theology, or, Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity collected from the appearances of Nature, published in 1802, became a popular textbook of apologetic. Its message was reinforced by the Bridgewater

Treatises which were published between 1833 and 1836. The Reverend Francis Henry Egerton, who became the eighth Earl of Bridgewater, bequeathed £8,000 for the publishing of a work or works of theistic apologetic. The very titles⁴⁷ of the works published give some indication of the variety of evidence adduced to prove the existence of a benevolent and wise designer of the universe. These volumes did not grip the popular mind as did the monumental work of Paley. Nevertheless two of the works went into nine editions. Adam Gifford as a young man would be familiar with at least some of the treatises and it may be that the Earl of Bridgewater's example led him to make his own bequest half a century later.

We may dismiss Paley and his naive arguments, but we shall not understand the nineteenth century unless we see the problem with which he was grappling. The general knowledge of God and the revealed knowledge of God of the earlier centuries had become identified with scientific knowledge of the world of nature and the word of scripture respectively. Natural theology came to mean the systematising of that knowledge of God which can be gained from the scientific study of nature. The Bible, however, offers knowledge of the natural world as well as knowledge of God, or so it seemed to the prosaic clerical minds of the early nineteenth century. The inerrancy of scripture was generally accepted and no distinction between myth and factual account was recognised. The question whether the new scientific knowledge of the world

could confirm the supposedly historical accounts given in scripture had to be faced.

In geology A.G.Werner, Professor of Mineralogy at Freiberg, held the field for some time with theories that in most respects confirmed the biblical accounts of the creation and the flood. James Hutton, the Scottish geologist, published his Theory of the Earth in 1795 and was subsequently accused of atheism because his interpretation of natural science did not confirm the biblical accounts. Scientists like Deluc and Kirwan opposed Hutton's theories and for a time Wernerian theories held their ground in Scotland largely through Robert Jameson. Hutton's theories were followed up by John Playfair, Professor of Mathematics and later of Natural Philosophy at Edinburgh. This was a period when the Scottish universities were dominated by the church. It was not infrequent for an academic post to be held by a minister who also had pastoral charge of a congregation. Where so many academic posts were held by men committed by their calling to the acceptance of a dogmatic faith it is understandable that science should be seen as just another way of interpreting the goodness and wisdom of the Almighty. In the course of one of the many disputes within the Scottish church Professor Playfair wrote an open letter in which he complained that few Scottish clergymen were eminent in mathematics and that in any case it was impossible for a man to do justice to the dual responsibility. The charge was answered anonymously by Thomas Chalmers, subsequently the author of the

first of the Bridgewater Treatises, then a young man, but later he himself opposed the appointment of university professors to pastoral charges. Nevertheless the link between science and religion in the universities was still strong. Of the authors of the Bridgewater Treatises, C.G.Gillispie writes :

" All the authors chosen knew something of science at first hand. Four were clergymen, four were physicians, and three of the eight had lectured on theology at one of the universities."⁴⁸

In contrast, two only of more than one hundred and ten Gifford lecturers, namely Bishop Barnes and Canon Raven, were clergymen and scientists. Such harmony as there was in the early nineteenth century was to be disrupted by later developments.

The publication in 1859 of Darwin's Origin of Species by means of Natural Selection marked the beginning of the end of the more popular type of natural theology. It was not that the new theories made it more difficult to believe in design but it was easier to believe in chance. The evolutionary approach weakened scriptural authority, for if the Genesis accounts were incorrect, might not the whole fabric prove unreliable? J.H.Stirling, the first Edinburgh Gifford lecturer, dates the decline in interest in natural theology from 1860⁴⁹. He records the bewildered defeat of his landlady under the crowing triumph of her son, a lad of seventeen or so, who had asked her to explain to him where Cain got his wife!⁵⁰ It is strange that difficulties which had been

dismissed in a paragraph by Origen should loom so large in the nineteenth century. It became clear as the century drew to its close that if religion was not to be completely undermined by the advances of science there must be some rapprochement between science and religion, which might be furnished by a natural theology that was not tied to popular apologetic. Church leaders wielded the hammer of scriptural inerrancy to crack the nut of new scientific theory, but the nut cracked the hammer. Lord Gifford sought a new enquiry which would make no appeal to supposed miraculous revelation.

7. Other Factors

The nineteenth century apologetic was somewhat different from the natural theology of the Deists for it went alongside the proclamation of an evangelical gospel. It was an aid to faith rather than a substitute. It was an attempt to appeal to the head as well as the heart. Francis Bacon had remarked three centuries earlier that natural theology suffices to confute atheism but not to inform religion and this well expresses the conviction of the nineteenth century evangelicals, on whose bookshelves Paley rubbed shoulders with holy writ. Wesley had recognised the part to be played by reason in apologetic and the interpretation of scripture but he was quite clear about reason's limitations. In his sermon on The Case of Reason Impartially Considered, he declared :

" Reason cannot produce faith. Although it is always consistent with reason, yet reason cannot produce faith

in the scriptural sense of the word."⁵¹

Thus a typical British compromise permitted natural theology to flourish alongside a sturdy evangelicalism in England and an austere Calvinism in Scotland. Lord Gifford desired to appeal to mind and heart and he expected natural theology to lead to a true and felt knowledge of God.

A further factor in the nineteenth century situation was the new interest in non-Christian religions, which had arisen partly as a result of missionary enterprise and partly by reason of the impetus given to their study by the scientific spirit of the age. David Livingstone, the great nineteenth century missionary hero, was explorer as well as evangelist and much of the early anthropological data was provided by missionaries. It seemed that some truth was to be found in other religions and if the Bible were shown to be little more than a human record then the study of religion in general might show the way to a universal religion, based on reason rather than revelation. It was Lord Gifford's hope that through the impartial study of religion and religious ideas true knowledge of God might be reached. If the sword of the spirit had been blunted by new scientific discoveries then natural theology might be the bow of burnished gold to save Scotland if not England from the dark satanic Mills and Huxleys of the nineteenth century.

In the Roman Catholic Church natural theology had retained its well established position. The Papal Encyclical of Leo XIII,

issued in 1879, restated the function of philosophy in relation to faith and gave a new impetus to Thomist studies.

" If philosophy be rightly and wisely used, it is able in a certain measure to pave and to guard the road to the true Faith; and is able, also, to prepare the minds of its followers in a fitting way for the receiving of revelation. Hence it has not untruly been called by the ancients "an education leading to the Christian Faith", "a prelude and help of Christianity", "a schoolmaster for the Gospel".⁵²

The Encyclical recognised St. Thomas as the philosopher par excellence :

" Moreover, carefully distinguishing reason from Faith, as is right, and yet joining them together in a harmony of friendship, he so guarded the rights of each; and so watched over the dignity of each, that, as far as man is concerned, reason can now hardly rise higher than she rose, borne up in the flight of Thomas; and Faith can hardly gain more helps and greater helps from reason than those which Thomas gave her." ⁵³

We cannot pretend that the publication of a Papal Encyclical would be likely to influence the declining years of a dour liberal protestant like Adam Gifford, but neo-Thomism was to influence the development of natural theology in subsequent decades. Lord Gifford did not envisage natural theology as an aid to faith, but rather as a means to what he called, in language reminiscent of Spinoza, "the true and felt knowledge of God".

8. Drawing the Threads Together

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century it was clear that a new appraisal of the two kinds of knowledge of God was needed. The authority of the church had been weakened from the time of the Reformation and now the authority of the Bible was shaken by the new critical approach and by new scientific discoveries. As we have seen, the attempt had been made to use natural theology as a support for revealed truth, but the rising tide of scientific discovery had swept away many of the more naive arguments of natural theology along with ingenuous appeals to the letter of scripture. Yet because man's reason had triumphed in so many other fields it seemed to many, including Lord Gifford, that reason applied to religion might meet with similar triumphs. In all races and in all generations men had believed in God and if the rigorous methods of chemistry or astronomy could be applied to religion clear conclusions concerning the existence and nature of God might emerge. Lord Gifford was himself a deeply religious man and realised that religion must be felt as well as known, yet, because he was a man of his own century, he put his trust in reason and scientific method to discover the truths of religion. He was too deeply committed to the philosophy of Spinoza and the scientific spirit of his century to conceive that truth might come through special or miraculous revelation. Natural theology, the sick man of Europe, was to stand on his own two feet. Only the nineteenth century could have produced such a last will and testament as that of Adam Gifford. It is little wonder that men of the twentieth century have at times found difficulty in fulfilling its conditions.

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PART ONE : A SURVEY OF THE GIFFORD LITERATURE

Chapter One

Lord Gifford's Will and Its Interpretation

1. Lord Gifford	page 33
2. The Gifford Bequest	36
3. Lord Gifford's Conception of Natural Theology	39
4. The Gifford Lecturers	43
5. An Earlier Classification	44
6. The Present Classification	47
References	50

1. Lord Gifford

Adam Gifford, we are told by one of the early Gifford lecturers, was " a Scotch lawyer, who by ability, hard work and self-denial had amassed a large fortune, and attained the dignified position of a seat on the Bench".¹ He was born in Edinburgh on February 29th, 1820, and was appointed to a judgeship at the comparatively early age of forty-nine. In his youth he was a bright boy who mastered his lessons easily and because of his persistent curiosity and acute intelligence he was nick-named "The Philosopher". Nevertheless when some of his equally precocious friends established a society for asking and answering questions he declined to join. However he more than atoned for this youthful omission; by his bequest he set generations of philosophers, scientists and theologians answering the profound questions that he himself had posed.

A deeply religious man, Lord Gifford brought to his thinking about religion the same keen mind that he exercised in the law court. In establishing the Gifford lectures he desired that the evidence for religion should be presented by the keenest minds of the day. The evidence was not to be one-sided, for he allowed that even sceptics might be appointed provided that "they be able reverent men, true thinkers, sincere lovers of and earnest inquirers after truth". The evidence was to be subjected to all the careful examination and cross-examination it would meet if presented in a court of law.

One small volume of Lord Gifford's work, Lectures delivered on various occasions, was published posthumously by his niece, Alice Raleigh, and his son, H.J.Gifford, in June 1889. The subjects of the lectures² are interesting as revealing the breadth of Lord Gifford's interests, for only two of them lie within his own discipline. J.H.Stirling used the introductory lecture of his second series to give a lengthy review of this little book.³ It is plain that in his philosophical and literary ventures Lord Gifford was an amateur, yet the little book of lectures reveals that he had read widely and thought deeply. His brother records in a memoir⁴ that Adam Gifford would retire to his room at the week-ends after a busy week in his chambers and would enjoy the company of the philosophers. We only need to read his will and his lecture on Substance to recognise that his week-end companion was often Spinoza.

Adam Gifford believed in God, as he testified in his will:

" I give my body to the earth as it was before, in order that the enduring blocks and materials thereof may be employed in new combinations; and I give my soul to God, in Whom and with Whom it always was, to be in Him and with Him for ever in closer and more conscious union."

He judged that if only the evidence could be adequately presented unbelievers would share the true and felt knowledge of God, in which man's highest well-being rests. In his lecture on Substance he said :

" Only go deep enough and press analysis far enough, and the most obstinate materialist may be made to see that matter is not all the universe, and that there is something below and above and around and within it."⁵

" The substance and essence of a man is his reasonable and intelligent soul."⁶

" Do you not feel with me that it is almost profane to apply the word Substance to anything short of God ? All lesser meanings are inadequate, all lower meanings are base. The universe and all its phenomena, suns and galaxies - with their inconceivable dependences, other universes, countlessly unthought, because unthinkable by finite minds, all, - all, - are but forms of the Infinite, the shadow of the Substance that is One for ever."⁷

These three brief quotations suffice to indicate the philosophical background against which the will is to be understood. When Lord Gifford described God in his deposition as "the Infinite, the All, the First and Only Cause, the One and Sole Substance, the Sole Being, the Sole Reality, and the Sole Existence," he was in effect anticipating that those who lectured would share his conception of God. It almost seems as if he had arrived at certain conclusions himself but that he desired to make provision for others to argue the case for him. The fact that the existence of God is already assumed and a definition given constitutes just one of the many difficulties facing the Gifford lecturer.

For the last eight years of his life Lord Gifford suffered from a protracted paralysis of the lower limbs and the right arm. Characteristically he learned to write with his left hand and continued to carry out as much work as he could. Some of his thoughts during this period are crystallised for us in the memoir written by his brother. We quote three of these obiter dicta.

" I think I have seen more clearly many things about God since I have been laid aside; in the night I often can't sleep, and I follow out new trains of thought about Him."⁸

" To be happier or wiser, that just means to have more of God."⁹

" He is infinite, how can our finite minds grasp His Being ? But it is not wrong to go on in our thinking as far as we can."¹⁰

It was during this period that he drew up his will, embodying the conditions under which the lectureships were to be established. The document is dated 21st August, 1885, and was witnessed by a medical doctor and a cab-driver. Lord Gifford died on 20th January, 1887.

2. The Gifford Bequest

Lord Gifford bequeathed £25,000 to the University of Edinburgh; £20,000 each to the universities of Glasgow and Aberdeen, and £15,000 to the University of St. Andrews for the establishment of :

" A Lectureship or Regular Chair for "Promoting, Advancing, Teaching, and Diffusing the Study of Natural Theology," in the widest sense of that term, in other words, "The Knowledge of God, the Infinite, the All, the First and Only Cause, the One and Sole Substance, the Sole Being, the Sole Reality, and the Sole Existence, the Knowledge of His Nature and Attributes, the Knowledge of the Relations which men and the whole universe bear to Him, the Knowledge of the Nature and Foundation of Ethics or Morals, and of all Obligations and Duties thence arising." This is the crucial section of the will, but Lord Gifford elaborated in legal form nine general principles for the guidance of the "patrons".

The first is concerned simply with the wise investment of funds. The second allows for intermissions in the lectureship for the accumulation of funds. The third limits the lectureship to two years but permits the reappointment of a lecturer for one further period of two years¹¹. The fourth and fifth principles are by far the most important and are discussed more fully later. The sixth principle insists that the lectures shall be "public and popular". Any admission fee charged should be as small as possible. One Gifford lecturer ventured to define "popular" as meaning "within the compass of the plain man's understanding"¹². If this indeed was the intention then this principle has not always been observed. The seventh principle suggests that there

should be a course of twenty lectures, though this should finally be left to the discretion of the lecturer. The eighth principle allows the patrons to make grants towards the publication of the lectures "in cheap form". The ninth principle regulates the auditing of accounts.

To return to the fourth principle: this established that no religious test should be applied in the appointment of lecturers.

" The lecturers appointed shall be subjected to no test of any kind, and shall not be required to take an oath, or to emit or subscribe any declaration of belief, or to make any promise of any kind; they may be of any denomination whatever, or of no denomination at all (and many earnest and high-minded men prefer to belong to no ecclesiastical denomination); they may be of any religion or way of thinking, or they may be so-called sceptics or agnostics or freethinkers, provided only that the "patrons" will use diligence to secure that they be able reverent men, true thinkers, sincere lovers of and earnest inquirers after truth."

The accusation is sometimes brought against Gifford lecturers that they set out to find rational arguments for what they accept by faith, or that they assume the truth of their conclusions before the argument opens. If there is truth in the accusation, and there may be some, we must not blame the founder, who thought that neither belief nor unbelief would sway a scholar who was a sincere inquirer after truth. This principle allows for the

appointment of a scholar like Karl Barth who does not consider that such a study as natural theology is possible; it permits the appointment of others whose arguments do not necessarily culminate in theistic conclusions. A philosopher must guard against wishful thinking but he cannot be blamed if he sincerely comes to the conclusion that reason confirms or supports his faith. So long as he is a sincere lover of and earnest inquirer after truth he may be appointed to a Gifford Chair.

3. Lord Gifford's Conception of Natural Theology

To understand the fifth principle we must recall the intellectual climate of the late nineteenth century and appreciate Lord Gifford's personal convictions. He believed in a general revelation, and this is substantiated by three brief quotations from his lecture on the Ten Avatars of Vishnu :

" Ever and again man's spirit tells him - 'The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men', in the crowd or the solitude, by night or by day, even still the heavens are opened, the dazzling smites us to the ground, and deep calleth unto deep."¹³

" God's revelations are not over, are not completed. We have not yet heard His last word, we shall never do so. We look for his coming still."¹⁴

He pictures the educated Hindu, who, without abandoning his own faith, can say :

" I find the great central doctrine of Christianity, that on which all its other doctrines turn and revolve

as on a pivot, to be an impressive, most mighty, and most magnificent Avatar - God manifest in the flesh!"¹⁵

What he viewed with suspicion, as is clear from his lecture on St. Bernard and the Middle Ages, are the extravagant claims that can be made in the name of so called miraculous revelation. This view is confirmed by Max Muller, who, in a brief tribute to Lord Gifford at the opening of his Gifford lectures, said :

" There can be no doubt that he deliberately rejected all miracles, whether as judge, on account of want of evidence, or as a Christian, because they seemed to him to be in open conflict with the exalted spirit of Christ's own teaching. Yet he remained always a truly devout Christian, trusting more in the great miracle of Christ's life and teaching on earth than in the small miracles ascribed to him by many of his followers."¹⁶

It seems then that Lord Gifford accepted revelation in a general sense but was chary of recognising what he described as supposed exceptional or so called miraculous revelation.

Much of the discussion concerning the correct interpretation of the will has ranged round this fifth principle, in which Lord Gifford declares :

" I wish the lecturers to treat their subject as a strictly natural science, the greatest of all possible sciences, indeed, in one sense, the only science, that of Infinite Being, without reference to or reliance upon any supposed

special exceptional or so-called miraculous revelation. I wish it considered just as astronomy or chemistry is. I have intentionally indicated, in describing the subject of the lectures, the general aspect which personally I would expect the lectures to bear, but the lecturers shall be under no restraint whatever in their treatment of their theme; for example, they may freely discuss (and it may be well to do so) all questions about man's conception of God or the Infinite, their origin, nature, and truth, whether God is under any or what limitations, and so on, as I am persuaded that nothing but good can result from such discussion."

The use of the analogy of chemistry and astronomy and the insistence that natural theology is a science have led to much confusion and the paragraph lays itself open to at least three different interpretations :

(1) It seems at first sight as if Lord Gifford believed that beginning from empirical data it is possible by careful reasoning to arrive at certain conclusions about God, just as in astronomy we reach conclusions concerning the movement of heavenly bodies. But in astronomy or chemistry we begin by accepting the existence of the phenomena we are investigating. In what Lord Gifford calls the greatest of all possible sciences we cannot begin with the assumption of God's existence or else we are not engaged in what has traditionally been understood to be natural theology.

Here again we detect the influence of Spinoza, who opened his Ethics with a definition of God, not dissimilar to that offered by Lord Gifford, and then proceeded by the method of mathematical reasoning.

(2) The second possible interpretation, and one adopted by some of the lecturers, is that we should use scientific methods to investigate the truths propounded by various religions. This is what Max Muller and others wanted to call "the science of religion". When we have finished such an investigation we have no more than an account of religious beliefs that actually have been or are held. Comparative religion may be a preparatory study and it is undoubtedly allowed under the wide Gifford terms but it must not be confused with natural theology. What Lord Gifford wanted was a "Science of Infinite Being" rather than a science of religion, but he did not see the contradiction involved in a science of infinite being.

(3) A third possibility is that Lord Gifford believed that the natural theologian could take the findings of the sciences, and, using similar scientific reasoning, draw conclusions concerning the ultimate nature of the universe. This interpretation led to the appointment of a number of scientists to the various chairs, but, as we shall see, again and again they declined the temptation to become natural theologians or openly admitted that there was a point where they were leaving the realm of science for that of metaphysics.

If we examine all the provisos made by Lord Gifford we find many varied interpretations are allowable. The lectures delivered in the past three-quarters of a century tell their own story of the many attempts made to untangle the threads, to understand the intention of Lord Gifford, to comply with his conditions and to answer some of the questions set by him.

4. The Gifford Lecturers

Between 1888 and 1965 some one hundred and thirteen names appear in the lists of Gifford lecturers in the four universities. Four names appear in two lists : Pringle-Pattison lectured at Aberdeen and Edinburgh, Edward Caird at St. Andrews and Glasgow, James Ward at St. Andrews and Aberdeen, and James Frazer at St. Andrews and Edinburgh. On two occasions at Edinburgh the lectures were not delivered although the names remain in the official lists. In 1907 Robert Flint's lectures were not given owing to his illness and more recently John Baillie's lectures were published posthumously and accorded the status of Gifford lectures. Baron von Hugel was appointed to the Gifford Chair at Edinburgh for the sessions 1924-26 but was compelled to withdraw because of ill-health. At Glasgow in 1935-37 Professor W.McNeile Dixon took the place of Emile Meyerson who had died. Jacques Maritain was appointed at Aberdeen but owing to war conditions he was unable to lecture and other commitments prevented his acceptance of a further invitation. There have been occasional gaps between two series of lectures by the same scholar due to sickness or other circumstances¹⁸. Among the Gifford

lecturers there have been two pairs of brothers, the Cairds and the Haldanes, two archbishops, three bishops, politicians like the Lords Balfour and Haldane as well as the scientists, philosophers and theologians one would expect in such a list. No woman has yet been appointed to a Gifford Chair.

It is understandable that there should be delays in the publication of lectures and at the time of writing over twenty series of lectures have not yet reached publication. Over ten of these are lectures given since 1948, and no doubt some of these are being prepared for publication. It is unfortunate that the list of unpublished lectures from the earlier period includes those of Bergson, Hocking and Schweitzer. This means that ninety two sets of lectures have been published, the work of eighty eight scholars¹⁹.

5. An Earlier Classification

The only previous attempt at a survey of Gifford literature was made by W.L.Davidson in the Croall Lectures in 1921 and published under the title, Recent Theistic Discussion. He wrote :

" They (the Croall Trustees) wished me to state what I conceive to be the lines of recent theistic reasoning that are specially important, and to express my opinion of their value, taken directly in connexion with the diverse series of Gifford Lectures delivered before the four Scottish Universities within the last quarter of a century."²⁰

The lists of Gifford lecturers then contained only forty three names. In his closing lecture Davidson offered the following classification,²⁰ which serves to illustrate the great variety of approaches made by an equally great variety of scholars. Where a name appears twice the series of lectures on which the classification is made is indicated in the reference notes.

A. ORIGIN OF THE IDEA OF GOD, AND THE GROWTH OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

(Anthropology, Mythology, etc)

E.B.Tylor, Andrew Lang, Max Muller, James G. Frazer,
C.P.Tiele, William James, William Ridgeway, Rudolfo
Lanciani, W.M.Ramsay.

B. PHILOSOPHICAL DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGION

I. Nationality of Religion

Edward Caird²¹, John Caird, H.M.Gwatkin, Otto Pfleiderer,
William Wallace, A.M.Fairbairn.

II. Religious Philosophy among Ancient Peoples

A.H.Sayce, James Adam, Edward Caird²², Lewis Campbell,
W.R.Inge, W.W.Fowler.

C. PHILOSOPHY AND ULTIMATE REALITY

James Ward²³, Josiah Royce, Emil Boutroux, R.B.Haldane,
A.C.Bradley, B.Bosanquet, John Watson, Samuel Alexander,
G.F.Stout.

D. PHILOSOPHY AND THEISM

I. With Theism as General Theme

J.H.Stirling, G.G.Stokes, A.C.Campbell, A.J.Balfour,
A.S.Pringle-Pattison²⁴, S.S.Laurie.

II. Special Aspects of Theism

James Ward²⁵, W.R.Sorley, A.B.Bruce, Henri Bergson,
C.C.J.Webb,

III. Theism and Science

Hans Driesch, Arthur Thomson.

Davidson's survey, made in 1921, provides a convenient dividing line. From this point there is a declining interest in the anthropological approach and an increasing interest in scientific thought. Idealism is losing its spell and metaphysicians are thinner on the ground. More attention has been given to moral philosophy and further ethical studies have been added to that of Sorley. There has been a growing interest in what we may call "the personal", following up the studies of Bosanquet, Bergson and Clement Webb. The status of religious knowledge has been challenged by modern positivism and a number of works have been concerned directly or indirectly with the nature of faith. Another feature of the later period has been the appointment of a number of scholars who are theologians rather than philosophers of religion. The Gifford programme of recent years gives the appearance of a continuing dialogue between scientists, theologians and philosophers. Such a dialogue is in the true spirit of the Gifford bequest.

6. The Present Classification

A further seventy series of lectures have been given since Davidson's volume was published, and some of the lectures given before 1921 have since appeared. The task of classification is considerably more difficult. In our attempt to investigate the various interpretations of natural theology and to elucidate its legitimate function, we shall review the lectures under the following headings :

I. The Scientific Study of Religion

In view of the veto on any supposed special revelation it is understandable that a number of lecturers should concern themselves with the study of those religions generally regarded as outside the realm of special revelation. In this section the work of scholars in the fields of anthropology and comparative religion is reviewed. William James's Varieties is included as a psychological study of religion, and Paterson's The Nature of Religion finds a place here as drawing conclusions from the data furnished by the scientific study of religion.

II. Metaphysical Ventures

Since the time of Aristotle, if not before, it has been assumed that metaphysical speculation can provide some knowledge of the being and nature of God. This exercise has frequently been described as natural theology. In this section are included those lectures which set out to give a total world-view within which it is possible to conceive of deity. Many of the

lectures discussed in other sections can be described as metaphysical, but the reason for their inclusion in other sections will become apparent.

III. Natural Theology in its narrower sense - Cosmology and Theism

One of the traditional tasks of natural theology has been the provision of rational arguments for the existence of God where a direct appeal to revelation is undesirable or unacceptable. This section includes those lectures mainly concerned with the traditional theistic arguments. Since the cosmological and teleological arguments involve law, order and design within the universe, the contributions of the scientists are included here. This section then is concerned with the attempts of the philosophers to examine the validity of the theistic arguments and the philosophisings of the scientists as they try to answer the question, " From a scientific study of nature can we draw any conclusions about God ? "

IV. The Wider Scope of Natural Theology

Some lecturers have dealt with one particular aspect of natural theology, while others have ranged widely over the whole field, producing in some cases what might well be regarded as an outline of Philosophy of Religion. These studies may impinge on subjects dealt with in other sections, but because they serve to illustrate the expansion of natural theology into what might be more fittingly called Philosophy of Religion they are accorded a section to themselves.

V. From Goodness to God - Arguments from Morality to Religion

Lord Gifford specifically included the study of the foundation of Ethics as possible subject matter and the lectures given by a number of moral philosophers are discussed in this section. The moral argument for the existence of God has been discussed frequently in Gifford lectures but not all the ethical studies reach theistic conclusions.

VI. Defenders of Faith - Reason's Vindication of Faith

One of the primary services rendered by natural theology in the Christian era has been the provision of apologetic. Many of the lecturers have been committed Christian theologians who have looked to natural theology to provide rational justification for what is accepted by faith. The use of the lectureship for this purpose, it is argued, is justifiable so long as the appeal is made to reason and not to special revelation. Such expositions of faith will be discussed in this section including Karl Barth's denial of the possibility of any such rational support.

VII. The Historical Approach

There remain a number of lecture courses, which, while they may be described as essays in natural theology, are more readily classified as historical accounts of its development. Some of the earlier lecturers made special studies of the Greek thinkers, the precursors of natural theology. Others have dealt with later periods of its development. This section provides a brief survey of the sources from which material is drawn for the account of natural theology given in Part Two.

Part I, Chapter 1Reference Notes

- 1 G.69. p.1
- 2 This volume was published privately at Frankfort-on-the-Main and contains lectures on : Ralph Waldo Emerson; Attention as an Instrument of Self-Culture; Saint Bernard of Clairvaux; Substance: a Metaphysical Thought; Law, a Schoolmaster, or the Educational Function of Jurisprudence; The Ten Avatars of Vishnu; and, The Two Fountains of Jurisprudence.
- 3 G.90. pp 197-216
- 4 H.J.Gifford, Recollections of a Brother, 1899, printed for the family.
- 5 Lectures delivered on various occasions, Frankfort, 1889, p.130.
- 6 Ibid. p. 152.
- 7 Ibid. pp. 154-5.
- 8 Recollections of a Brother, p.25.
- 9 Ibid. pp. 25-6.
- 10 Ibid. p.26.
- 11 It appears that only in the case of Max Muller has the period been extended to four years.
- 12 G.29, p. 11.
- 13 Lectures delivered on various occasions, p.217.
- 14 Ibid. p. 237.
- 15 Ibid. pp. 239-40.
- 16 G.69. p.3.
- 17 The Reality of God, 1931, includes some of the material Baron von Hugel had prepared.
- 18 Balfour's second series at Glasgow was delayed by the first war; John Caird's by sickness; Farnell's second series was also delayed.

- 19 This includes Boutroux's Science and Religion in Contemporary Philosophy and Fairbairn's Philosophy of the Christian Religion, which are not acknowledged as Gifford lectures but are thought to contain much of the material used.
- 20 Recent Theistic Discussion, Edinburgh, 1921, pp. 1-2
- 21 Caird's St. Andrews lectures on The Evolution of Religion.
- 22 Caird's Glasgow lectures on The Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers
- 23 Ward's St. Andrews lectures on The Realm of Ends.
- 24 Pringle-Pattison's earlier lectures at Aberdeen on The idea of God.
- 25 Ward's Aberdeen lectures on Naturalism and Agnosticism.

Chapter Two

The Scientific Study of Religion

1	Natural Religion and Natural Theology	page 53
2	Early Anthropological Studies	55
3	A Science of Religion ?	60
4	Comparative Religion	62
5	Further Studies in Primitive Religion	64
6	The Living God of Revelation	65
7	The Essence of Religion	67
	References	71

1. Natural Religion and Natural Theology

Hume recognised that there are two permissible and fruitful lines of enquiry in the study of man's ideas about God. The first approach is seen in his Natural History of Religion, and the second in his Dialogues concerning Natural Religion. The former is a study of natural religion while the latter is concerned with the problems of natural theology. Confusion has often arisen because the distinction between the two has not been made clear. Hume himself introduces "Natural Religion" into the title of the Dialogues to describe what turns out to be natural theology. We find the same kind of confusion among Gifford lecturers. Lord Balfour, for instance, assumes in the opening paragraph of his first lecture that the general subject of the Gifford lectures is "Natural Religion". H.H. Farmer points out the same misunderstanding of the term on the part of Archbishop Soderblom¹ and indeed Soderblom's lectures were concerned with religion rather than theology. The term "Natural Religion" never appears in Lord Gifford's will. Indeed he appears to avoid the word "religion", which he uses only once and then to explain that the lecturers may be "of no religion".

Theology is the conceptual element in religion and therefore we must not expect to find a theology apart from a religion of some kind. That we should look for natural theology in natural religion and revealed theology in revealed

religion is a tempting generalisation but one that has created misunderstanding. The distinction between natural and revealed religion was quite clear to western scholars in the late nineteenth century. Revealed religions were those that have shared in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Other religions, even if they claim revelation as Hinduism does, were to be regarded as natural religions. So much is clear. This led some of the early lecturers to conclude that the conditions of Lord Gifford's will demanded the consideration of natural religion to the exclusion of any reference to revealed religion. Now Christian thinkers, beginning with St. Paul, have recognised that there are truths embedded in Christianity which are also available to those outside the circle of revelation. The existence of God is such a truth. If this is so then there cannot be a clear cut distinction between natural and revealed theology corresponding to the distinction between natural and revealed religion. If natural theology is that knowledge of God which can be reached by human reason, then it will be found in those religions described as revealed as well as those called natural. Any assertions about God, which can be reached by reasoned argument, are still natural theology even when included within the bounds of revealed religion. Thus while we may not derive revealed theology from natural religion, we may well discover natural theology within revealed religion. H.H.Farmer went a stage further :

" So far from natural theology being equated with

natural religion, its significance is found in the fact that its appeal, resting on reason, is potentially universal and independent of what religion a man professes or whether he professes any at all." ²

Lord Gifford did not specifically distinguish natural theology from natural religion, though his whole emphasis is on the conceptual aspect of religion. Because of this misunderstanding it is not surprising that three of the first four Gifford lecturers were anthropologists, - students of natural religion rather than natural theology.

2. Early Anthropological Studies

At Aberdeen the first lecturer was E.B.Tylor, Professor of Anthropology at Oxford. His lectures were not published but we learn that

" They dealt with savage peoples and their beliefs, ways and customs; and wearing apparel, implements (stone, flint and other), and objects of religious interest among the lower races were exhibited in illustration of the lecturer's discourses." ³

It is not often that Gifford lecturers avail themselves of visual aids in the presentation of their lectures !

The first occupant of the Gifford Chair at St. Andrews was a scholar who is perhaps better known in the realm of folk-lore and fairy tale. Andrew Lang's The Making of Religion is a sustained argument for primitive monotheism, posing the conundrum, "Which came first, the ghost or the god ?"

It reads in parts very much like the proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research even to the appendix containing the evidence of Police Constable Higgs concerning poltergeist phenomena at Joe White's house!

In contrast Max Muller's four volumes are marked by careful scholarship, the result of a lifetime's study of eastern religions. In earlier years he had lectured at Oxford on Modern Literature and Language and had written The Science of Language. In view of more recent developments in linguistic analysis his comments in the introductory Gifford lecture in 1888 are not without interest :

" Whatever further research may teach us about the true nature of language, it is clear, from a purely practical point of view, that language supplies at least the tools of thought, and that a knowledge of these tools is as essential to a philosopher, as a knowledge of his ship and oars is to the sailor."⁴

He continues :

" The Science of Language . . . is pre-eminently an analytical science. We take languages as we find them . . . and then analyse every word till we arrive at elements which resist further analysis."⁵

Muller's description of mythology as one of the earliest ramifications of language is also illuminating :

" These mythological expressions are by no means restricted to religious ideas, but . . . there is a period in the

growth of language in which everything may or must assume mythological expression."⁶

Mythology, for Muller, is not the expression of thought but the very vehicle of thought. Language and thought are inseparable. He declares that thought is language minus sound rather than as is commonly supposed that language is thought plus sound. Thus language and thought are not only inseparable but identical. In early Hebrew thought, for instance, to know the name of a man or a god is to know something of his nature.

Max Muller proceeds to a careful definition of terms. Religion is the subject itself; Theology is the study or science of the subject.⁷ Religion gives what he calls the sensus numinis⁸ as opposed to the kind of knowledge that the ordinary senses give. "A known God," he tells us, "would ipso facto cease to be God."⁹ It is interesting to note that twenty years later Rudolf Otto coined the word "numinous". Religion, for Muller, is a mystical insight into the nature of reality - what Fichte meant when he called religion the highest knowledge.

" All religions may be called endeavours to give expression to that sense of the real presence of the Divine in nature and in man."¹⁰

In Muller's view the commonly accepted distinction between natural and revealed religion is untenable, for people of all religions claim to have had insight into the nature of reality and this could only come through a revelation of some kind. For instance, it is normally assumed in the Judaeo-Christian

tradition that, when Moses was told that the name of God is "I am that I am", this was revelation. Max Muller claims that among the twenty sacred names of God given in the Avesta there appears the name "Ahmi yet ahmi", "I am that I am". He asserts that the relevant verse in the book of Exodus is a later addition and that the idea of God as "I am that I am" comes from a Zoroastrian source.¹¹

In his first course of lectures Muller set out to define natural religion. In his second series, published as Physical Religion, he surveyed the field of Indian religion and concluded that,

"The human mind, such as it is, and unassisted by any miracles except the eternal miracles of nature, did arrive at some of the fundamental doctrines of our own religion."¹²

This is not to say that the human mind reached these concepts by a process of pure thought, but rather that these ideas of God were reached without recourse to the revelation given to Jews and Christians. Muller's arguments offer support for a natural insight which can perceive a general revelation open to all rather than a natural reason which unaided can conclude its argument with God.

The third course, Anthropological Religion, treated of man's belief in a soul; the fourth course was entitled Theosophy or Psychological Religion. Thus Muller traced the course of man's development from primitive natural religion to a sophisticated mysticism, in which man ultimately loses his being in God.

If we can say that there is something of revelation in all religions, may we also trace something of "nature" in all religions including those generally regarded as revealed. At the turn of the century A.H.Sayce addressed himself to a study of Egyptian and Babylonian religions. While he is far from asserting that Judaism and Christianity grew "naturally" out of these ancient religions, he traces back many of the fundamental ideas of Judaism and Christianity to their source in earlier religions, thus arriving at a similar conclusion to that of Max Muller. Sayce concludes :

" The doctrine of emanation, of a trinity, wherein one god manifests himself in three persons, of absolute thought as underlying the permanent substance of all things, all go back to the priestly philosophers of Egypt. Gnosticism and Alexandrianism, the speculations of Christian metaphysic and the philosophy of Hegel, have their roots in the valley of the Nile."¹³

In the second series of lectures he arrives at a similar conclusion concerning the origins of Hebrew religion.

" The same relation as that borne by the religion of ancient Egypt to Christianity, is borne by the religion of Babylon to Judaism. The Babylonian conception of the divine, imperfect though it was, underlay the faith of the Hebrews, and tintured it to the very end."¹⁴

Nevertheless Sayce recognises "a gulf, wide and impassable" between Judaism and Babylonian religion, but the question

remains whether the difference is one of degree or kind. Theologians speak of the gradual revelation of God in the scriptures. Are we to think of a gradual revelation of God through so called natural religions culminating in Judaism and Christianity? Or are we to look for a clear distinction between "general" and "special" revelation? Or are we, with Barth, to see everything outside the circle of Christian revelation as idolatry? From the beginning the Gifford lecturers found Lord Gifford's exclusion of miraculous revelation difficult to interpret.

3. A Science of Religion?

As early as 1873 Max Muller had described his studies as the Science of Religion. C.P. Tiele, Professor of the History and Philosophy of Religion in the University of Leyden, called his Edinburgh lectures Elements of the Science of Religion. The term "Natural Theology", he tells us, is outdated, and no doubt Lord Gifford's demand for "a science of Infinite Being" encouraged him to use the term Science of Religion. Yet this new science of religion should not be confused with either natural theology or philosophy of religion. Tiele's description of it makes the difference clear.

"All she (Science of Religion) desires, and all she is entitled to do, is to subject religion, as a human and therefore historical and psychological phenomenon, to unprejudiced investigation, in order to ascertain how it arises and grows and what are its essentials, and in order

thoroughly to understand it. . . He (the Scientist of Religion) knows nothing of heretics, schismatics, or heathens; to him, as a man of science, all religious forms are simply objects of investigation."¹⁵

In this description we recognise what we have come to call Comparative Religion or Psychology of Religion; it is not natural theology.

It is clear that Lord Gifford's conditions permit such scientific investigation of religion; it is equally clear that he wanted the lecturers to discuss the truth of religion. It is not unfair to say that Lord Gifford expected from his Science of Infinite Being much that some Spiritualists expect from the Society for Psychical Research, namely a dismissal of any false or fraudulent element and the establishment of essential truth. Such research may well expose fraud, yet it is questionable whether such research can adequately demonstrate the validity of religious truth. Nevertheless Tiele expressed the pious victorian hope that

"without preaching, or special pleading, or apologetic argument, but solely by means of the actual facts it reveals, our beloved science will help to bring home to the restless spirits of our time the truth that there is no rest for them unless 'they arise and go to their Father'."¹⁶

It is as well that the term Science of Religion has fallen into disuse since it is ambiguous and confusing. The study of

of comparative religion provides valuable data for the natural theologian, but it is not itself natural theology.

4. Comparative Religion

The Universities of St. Andrews and Edinburgh in turn invited Sir James Frazer to give their Gifford lectures, in 1911 and 1924 respectively. The published works are both straightforward anthropological studies of religious practices and beliefs. They are set in the context of the Gifford formula, but after defining natural theology Frazer excuses himself from any dogmatic or philosophical approach. The definition within which he works is given thus :

" By natural theology I understand that reasoned knowledge of a God or gods which man may be supposed, whether rightly or wrongly, capable of attaining to by the exercise of his natural faculties alone."¹⁷

The phrase "reasoned knowledge" suggests that man's religious beliefs are the product of reason rather than insight and it is significant that his second definition, given some thirteen years later, makes no reference to "reasoned knowledge". In the Edinburgh lectures Frazer writes :

" By natural theology I understand the conception which man, without the aid of revelation, has formed to himself of the existence and nature of a God or gods."¹⁸

Theology, Frazer tells us, is the conceptual aspect of man's religion, at first undifferentiated from religion itself.

Only at a later stage does man separate religion and theology. Frazer draws attention to the analogous development that has taken place in man's scientific thought. As the scientist has gradually reduced the many forms of matter to one substance, hydrogen, so the primitive theologians reduced the multitude of spirits to one God. Theology is the application of reason to religion. It is clear from Frazer's work that he too finds the distinction between natural and revealed religion unsatisfactory.

Since Frazer's Edinburgh lectures in 1924-25 there have only been two series of lectures which can be called anthropological and both appointments were made at St. Andrews. In 1931-32 R.R.Marett lectured on Faith, Hope and Charity in Primitive Religion. He is concerned more particularly with the pre-theological stages of religion, where the emotional element is dominant and the rational element scarcely evident. Rhythm serves primitive man in lieu of reasoning²⁰. Reasoning may produce theology later but it has little or no part to play in the beginnings of religion.

" It was the savage who first made fire; and doubtless he burnt his fingers badly in so doing. Religion is likewise playing with fire. The religious man is trying out the properties of an element which warms but also burns and scars. Thanks to the predominance of emotion over reason in it, religious experience is always hot. Gone cold it has gone out. Rationalism can at most serve to temper a flame which it does not light and may easily extinguish."²¹

In this pre-scientific stage of culture religion has a survival value for it is through primitive religion that moral ideals grow. In his second series of lectures, Sacraments of Simple Folk, Marett investigates elementary symbolic forms of thought and action concerned with everyday happenings, matters of life such as eating, fighting and mating, and matters of death.

The most recent series of lectures based on anthropological study is Experiments in Living by Professor Alexander MacBeath, who lectured at St. Andrews in 1948-49. The work is solely concerned with the foundations of ethics and he deals with the moral and social life of the Trobriand Islanders, Crow Indians, Australian aborigines and a Bantu tribe.

5. Further Studies in Primitive Religion

A number of lecturers have turned to early European culture to find the roots of later religions. The pre-philosophical stages of Greek religion were discussed by L.R.Farnell at St.St. Andrews in 1920. His Greek Hero Cults and Ideas of Immortality is concerned with religious origins and the relationship between hero worship and divine worship with little reference to the philosophical thought of the early Greeks. His second series of lectures in 1924-25 deals with The Attributes of God. This is an historical and factual account of the concepts of God held in various primitive religions, and only in the closing chapter does the lecturer touch on metaphysical problems and then only to indicate them.

Similarly in Asiatic Elements in Greek Civilisation W.M.Ramsay examined textual and archaeological evidence in an attempt to find the antecedents of Hellenism, tracing social and religious customs to their early beginnings in Crete and Asia Minor. William Ridgeway made a similar ethnological study of the evolution of Greek and Roman religion, when he lectured at Aberdeen in 1909-11, but these lectures were never published.²² Primitive Roman religion was one of the themes of Rodolfo Lanciani's strange miscellany, published as New Tales of Old Rome in 1901. Mention should be made in this connection of Edwyn Bevan's Holy Images, which contains the first four of his Gifford lectures. The later lectures, published in Symbolism and Belief, are much better known. The earlier lectures take the form of an enquiry into idolatry and the use of images in paganism and Christianity.

6. The Living God of Revelation

Again and again lecturers have returned to the problem involved in the distinction between natural and revealed religion. The problem is not solved by speaking of general and special revelation as John Baillie pointed out :

" While greatly preferring the distinction between a general and special revelation to the traditional one between a natural and revealed knowledge, I cannot find it wholly satisfactory. Not all the light that God has imparted to the various pagan peoples in the course of their historical experience is general to them all;

there is something that is special to each."²³

This conviction that there is something special about all revelation is the dominant theme of Soderblom's lectures on The Living God.

Archbishop Soderblom of Upsala lectured at Edinburgh in 1931 a few months before his death. He was primarily a theologian and churchman, but he had been interested in the history of religions and particularly in Iranian religion from his student days when he had been greatly influenced by C.P. Tiele, one of his predecessors at Edinburgh. The Archbishop speaks quite readily of the revelation given to the peoples of India and Persia, and of the revelation to the Greeks.²⁴ Progress may be explained in part in terms of natural evolution, but all religion is revealed religion. The very use of the term revelation implies that initiative lies with God. Soderblom quotes W.P. Paterson's Gifford lectures with approval :

" When we trace the course of religious history so far as it is known, and when we study its golden ages, and especially the origins and achievements of Christianity, there is a very considerable body of evidence to justify the belief that the living God has had to do with the historical process."²⁵

Soderblom believes that the living God who has revealed himself to the Persians, Greeks and Indians has revealed himself supremely in Judaism and Christianity. Real religion wherever it is experienced is a meeting with God - not psychological

discipline or a rationally created metaphysic. He declares :

" Piety in the Bible is never mere psychology - never monologue in the proper sense, never philosophical discourse - but drama."²⁶

Religion is concerned with the right relationship to God and in this drama man is not a spectator; man and God are both actors. Religion is meeting with God, not just thinking about him. If this is true of all religion then we must look again at Lord Gifford's exclusion of so-called miraculous revelation. To exclude any possibility of revelation is to treat God as if he were an object to be discovered rather than a personal being who can know and be known. If Soderblom is right then our only hope of knowing God is through religion, and natural theology is an attempt to think as clearly as we can about God. Soderblom does not specifically draw this conclusion concerning the function of natural theology, but if true knowledge of God depends on the I-Thou relationship he describes then natural theology may elucidate the idea of God but it cannot present the living God.

7. The Essence of Religion

In A Pluralistic Universe²⁷ William James analysed the process whereby an individual comes to accept a faith for himself. He recognises that rational argument may play a part at the beginning, but faith is more than thinking that something is likely or that it ought to be true. There is something more in religion which meets a deep need of human nature. In his

Varieties of Religious Experience James set out to examine this something more offered by religion, which is not to be found in reasoned theories about the nature of the universe. He concluded:

" The theories which religion generates . . . are secondary; and if you wish to grasp her essence, you must look to the feelings and the conduct as being the more constant elements. It is between these two elements that the short circuit exists on which she carries on her principal business, while the ideas and symbols and other institutions form loop-lines which may be perfections and improvements, and may even some day be united into one harmonious system, but which are not to be regarded as organs with an indispensable function, necessary at all times for religious life to go on."²⁸

There is truth in this, but the "faith-state" will not long continue if the rational theory to which it is linked is undermined. Once Dorothy discovered that the Wizard of Oz was only a little man with a microphone and a box of tricks all fear was gone. A man will not truly worship or direct his conduct towards certain ideals unless he believes that his God is real. Here natural theology may help in the provision of rational support for a position held by faith. We cannot describe the Varieties as natural theology but William James helps to elucidate the part to be played by natural theology. Once again we are reminded that theology grows out of religion rather than religion out of theology.

W.P. Paterson's Nature of Religion provides a threefold argument for the truths of religion. First, he argues that religion would not have evolved unless it had some useful function to serve. When one form of religion has decayed another has taken its place and higher forms have replaced lower manifestations. This, he argues, provides a strong prima facie case for the truth of Christianity as the highest form of religion. Unfortunately the same kind of argument can be used to show that man will ultimately grow out of a theistic type of religion. Secondly, religion has expanded man's thought concerning himself and the universe; it has opened the way to philosophy and has given man a purpose without which life would be meaningless; it has given man an optimistic world view. Neither of these arguments, however, meet the objection that religion may be just a useful development in man's early evolution to be replaced later by a more mature philosophy. Paterson's third argument is more fundamental but it is a declaration of the self-evidence of religious truth rather than an argument :

" The most obvious reason why religion has been believed by man is, as Coleridge put it, that it found him, or in Bosanquet's phrase, that he felt this was the real thing.²⁹"

The ultimate ground of assurance for Paterson is a faith supported by but not established by reason. He concludes :

" I am disposed to think that the best reason which the Christian Church or the Christian man has for believing

his religion to be true is that, made as he is and seeing in it what he sees, he is constrained to believe it to be true." 30

The Buddhist, Mohammedan and the Jew might make similar assertions. Yet when a man asserts faith he is usually also asserting that the religion of his choice provides him with the most reasonable account of the nature of things and if he finds unreasonable elements he devises a philosophy of religion to demonstrate that they are only apparently unreasonable. It is with this latter rational approach to religion that natural theology is concerned.

Part 1. Chapter 2Reference Notes

- 1 G.33. p.5
- 2 G.33. p.6
- 3 Davidson, Recent Theistic Discussion, p.175
- 4 G.69. p.21
- 5 G.69. p.21
- 6 G.69. p.21
- 7 G.69. p.45
- 8 G.69. p.72
- 9 G.69. p.71
- 10 G.69. p.72
- 11 G.72. pp. 52-3
- 12 G.70. p.366
- 13 G.86. pp. 250f
- 14 G.86. p.500
- 15 G.97. Vol. 1. pp.8-9
- 16 G.97. Vol. 2. p.500
- 17 G.39. Vol.1. p.1
- 18 G.40. Vol.1. p.13
- 19 G.40. Vol.1. p.10
- 20 G.64. p. 6
- 21 G.64. p. 15
- 22 See Davidson, Op.Cit. p.183
- 23 G.3. p.188
- 24 G.88. p.265
- 25 G.88. p.265 quoted from G.74. p.449

- 26 G.88. p.269
- 27 William James, A Pluralistic Universe, pp.328-9
- 28 G.52. pp.494-5
- 29 G.74. p.481
- 30 G.74. p.483

Chapter Three

Metaphysical Ventures

1	The Shadow of Hegel	page 74
2	Neo-Hegelianism	75
3	Absolute Idealism	78
4	Personal Idealism	84
5	Body, Mind and God	87
6	Realist Metaphysics	91
7	Pragmatism	99
8	Tentative Conclusion	101
	Reference Notes	103

1. The Shadow of Hegel

"Speculative philosophy," says Whitehead, "is the endeavour to frame a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element in our experience can be interpreted."¹ The task of the metaphysician is to build up a picture of the universe from the thousand and one oddly shaped jig-saw pieces of empirical experience. Unfortunately he has no guarantee that all the pieces are there or even that the pieces he has belong to the same puzzle. From his narrower experience of the separate sciences he concludes that some of the pieces fit together and he follows a metaphysical hunch which suggests that there is indeed one gigantic picture into which all the parts fit. The sky is always the most difficult part of a jig-saw puzzle and metaphysicians have their own problems with the "sky". Indeed they are often accused of introducing extra pieces - intuitions or revelations - in order to complete the picture. The Hegelians assumed that there is a complete picture, that all the bits do indeed fit together, and that every tiny piece of experience is necessary to make sense of the universe. To follow our jig-saw analogy, Hegel believed that religion gives you the picture on the box! Less prosaically Hegel says :

" As on the summit of a mountain, removed from all hard distinctness of detail, we calmly overlook the limitations of the landscape and the world, so by religion we are

lifted above all the obstruction of finitude. In religion, therefore, man beholds his own existence in a transfigured reflexion, in which all the divisions, all the crude lights and shadows of the world, are softened into eternal peace under the beams of a spiritual sun."²

Through religion man sees himself as part of the Absolute, or to use Hegel's terminology, "religion is the Divine Spirit's knowledge of itself through the mediation of finite spirit."³

Sixty years after the death of Hegel British philosophers were still under his spell and traces of Hegelian thought are to be found in almost all the early Gifford lecturers who can fairly be described as philosophers.

2. Neo-Hegelianism

"God is the beginning of all things, and the end of all things," wrote Hegel.⁴ "All our life," wrote Edward Caird, "is a journey from God to God."⁵ God is the beginning and the end of knowledge. Caird gives unqualified approval to Hegel's description of religion. For Caird God is transcendent and external as well as immanent, but it is the immanence that he stresses. Caird claims that Christianity, with certain qualifications, is the true type of religion but he also recognises that some non-Christian religions manifest the true religious spirit. In his lectures at St. Andrews Caird traced in Hegelian fashion the evolution of religion. Greek religious thought is the type of objective religion; God is immanent in

the world of nature. Jewish religion is subjective; God is revealed in the moral consciousness of man. Christianity is the type of universal religion, embracing the subjective and the objective elements. This, in brief, is the thesis of Caird's Evolution of Religion.

R.B.Haldane, in his Pathway to Reality, describes Hegel as "the greatest master of abstract thought that the world has seen since the day when Aristotle died".⁶ An admirer of Hegel, he defends him against many critics, and, although he admits difficulties in Hegelian interpretation, he confesses at the end of the first series of lectures :

" All that is in these lectures I have either taken or adapted from Hegel, and that in Hegel there is twice as much again of equal importance which these lectures cannot even touch."⁷

God, for Haldane, is the Ultimate Reality, into which all else can be resolved.⁸ God is not Substance but Subject.⁹ God is defined as "mind that comprehends itself completely".¹⁰

Finally Haldane expresses his own conclusions in one of his many Hegelian quotations.

" God is God only in so far as He knows Himself; His self-knowledge is, further, His self-consciousness in man, and man's knowledge of God, which proceeds to man's self-knowledge in God."¹¹

In the Hegelian sense, then, man can find God through reason; indeed, reason is the only satisfactory pathway to Reality.

A year after Haldane had lectured at St. Andrews, S.S. Laurie occupied the Gifford Chair at Edinburgh. His published lectures take the form of meditations under the Hegelian sounding title, Synthetica.¹² Here again we have almost pure Hegelianism though it is variously described as Natural Realism or Absolute Idealism.¹³ Logical demonstrative proof of theism is an impossible task in Laurie's view. He does not propose to demonstrate the existence of God so much as to "point Him out" or "show Him to be there". He says :

" Ultimate philosophy as a synthetic presentation does not take the form of a demonstration, but is rather as lucid a statement as possible of what we see."¹⁴

The world is a unity and God is the Object as revealed to the finite mind but is finally the Absolute Synthesis.¹⁵

" The Absolute Synthesis is God; and there can be no other God. What men have often called God has not been false, but only one aspect of the total content of the Notion."¹⁶

" God is All; All in All; One; One in Many; Identity in Difference."¹⁷

The problem of evil in the world is resolved by declaring evil to be Negation necessary for the fulfilment of the creative purpose. Discord, pain and death are conditions of the possibility of finite life. Man struggles on, seeing himself as part of the externalisation of God and his own struggles as part of the creative activity. He is made for more than this

world and he carries into a further life all that has been valuable in his ethical experience.

Henry Jones, a disciple of Edward Caird, was one of the last of the Hegelian lecturers. He lectured at Glasgow in the years 1920-21. With Caird he believed that the Absolute must be personal.¹⁸ The indwelling of God constitutes the personality of the individual and empowers him with freedom. In this way Henry Jones safeguards the necessities of both morality and religion. The faith that Henry Jones expounded was not classical Christianity but his own form of Hegelian Christianity. "It was, he believed, 'a faith that enquires and invites enquiry', 'without one strand of superstition', capable of meeting the most rigorous demands of scientific method and yet of satisfying man's profound religious aspirations."¹⁹ So Henry Jones's biographer described this heroic statement of faith, prepared and delivered under the shadow of an illness that was to prove fatal. The title of the lectures, A Faith that Enquires, may give us a clue to the function of natural theology in relation to faith. Henry Jones did not reason his way to his faith but nevertheless brought his reasoning to bear on his faith.

3. Absolute Idealism

Josiah Royce, the first American scholar to occupy a Gifford chair, propounded his own particular brand of Idealism at Aberdeen at the turn of the century. All individual

experience is shown to be partial and fragmentary. Meaning can only be found in the "Individual of Individuals, namely the Absolute or God himself".²⁰ In the first volume of The World and the Individual four possible interpretations of being are discussed. Realism is written off as unsatisfactory; Mysticism as defining "Real Being as Wholly within Immediate Feeling" has severe limitations; what Royce describes as Critical Rationalism faces the same problems as realism in that we have no means of getting at the supposed "real" world apart from ideas. After critical appraisal of these conceptions or misconceptions of Being Royce expounds a fourth way, "the Synthetic or the constructive Idealistic conception of what it is to be".²¹ This means that :

" Being is

- (1) a complete expression of the internal meaning of the finite idea with which, in any case, we start our quest;
- (2) a complete fulfilment of the will or purpose partially embodied in this idea;
- (3) an individual life for which no other can be substituted."²²

Royce's specific contribution lies in his definition of internal meaning in terms of will or purpose. The external meaning is dependent upon the internal meaning and, since purpose is essentially mental, the Absolute or the ultimately Real is the ideal community of all purposes. In the Absolute the finite and the infinite, the one and the many, the world and

the individual, God and man find their unity.²³ God, for Royce, is personal. Eternally viewed, God's life is the infinite whole that includes the endless temporal processes and consciously surveys it as one life. Temporally viewed his life is the entire realm of moment to moment consciousness.²⁴ His final conclusion concerning the relationship of the individual to the Absolute is expressed in his closing paragraph.

" Despite God's absolute unity, we, as individuals, preserve and attain our unique lives and meanings, and are not lost in the very life that sustains us, and that needs us as its own expression. This life is real through us all; and we are real through union with that life. Close is our touch with the eternal. Boundless is the meaning of our nature."²⁵

All this, of course, does not constitute a proof of the existence of God, but then, if realism - in the sense that objects exist "outside" which correspond to our ideas - is dismissed, it is difficult to see what proof is possible. What Royce provides is a metaphysical system within which it is possible to account for religious experience without contradiction. Perhaps this is all that Idealism can do.

This was the conclusion arrived at by Professor A.C. Bradley in his Glasgow lectures, delivered in 1907 but not published until 1940. He wrote :

" The truth, the secret of things, God, is not

something far off and clouded in impenetrable mystery; it is within us, and the very centre of our being, and we have only to look there to find it. To prove God is not only impossible, it is a senseless endeavour, because God is already implied in the very centre of the thought which sets out to prove him. All you can do is to make the implication clear."²⁶

Andrew C. Bradley, Professor of Poetry at Oxford, was the younger brother of the distinguished author of Appearance and Reality. While reflecting his brother's thought, he brings the insights of poetry to his metaphysical interpretation of the universe. The scientific picture, he reminds us, is fragmentary and analytic whereas poetry sees reality as a whole and unifies experience. Poetry is not true in the scientific sense, yet the poet sees truth that the scientist may miss.²⁷ Similarly religious language does not yield literal truth but nevertheless expresses religious truth. The problem of the figurative use of height, for instance, which seems to have unduly disturbed present day thought²⁸, was discussed and dismissed by Bradley in 1907.²⁹ Whether we can ever really know God is problematic for the Absolute Idealist and the identification of God and the Absolute has its own difficulty succinctly expressed by F.H. Bradley.

" If you identify the Absolute with God, that is not the God of religion. If again you separate them, God becomes a finite factor in the Whole."³⁰

A.C. Bradley avoids the use of the term "Absolute" and does not seem to be worried about the distinction. At times he uses the term "Kingdom of God" to suggest the unity within which God and finite individuals are brought together; at other times he writes as if God himself were that unity. Ultimately there can be no discord and through the struggle against evil and through suffering man seeks his supreme good in the infinite.

Bernard Bosanquet, who lectured at Edinburgh in 1911-12, adhered much more closely to the teaching of F.H. Bradley. Logically the principle of non-contradiction involves a world which is a "whole" and so truth can be defined as the whole.³¹ The individual only finds his fulfilment as he discovers himself as part of the whole. The universe is, in the well known phrase of Keats, a vale of soul-making. Like F.H. Bradley, Bosanquet distinguishes between the God of religious experience and the Absolute. The God of religion is ultimately only an appearance of Reality. In the language of Christian theology God is described as Father, Son, Holy Spirit, Creator and Providence, but none of these terms can be applied to the Absolute which has nothing outside itself. Religion presupposes a personal God with whom personal relations are possible as with other selves. Yet once again we are reminded that religion is unable to prove the existence of such a God. Religion "is an experience of God, not a proof of him".³² Through religion the individual gains assurance of the stability

of life; he is no longer hemmed in by the hazards and hardships of finite life; he is saved from isolation. He wins his place in the Absolute, or rather, he wins knowledge of his place in the Absolute.

C.A.Campbell, lecturing at St. Andrews in 1953-55, offered a revised idealism, combining moral and metaphysical arguments to support what he describes as supra-rational theism. He himself declares that his answers differ from F.H.Bradley's and Bosanquet's only in their mode of presentation and not in their substance³³ and in his concluding chapters he follows Bradley's arguments closely. On the basis of non-contradiction he argues to the unity, infinitude and eternity of ultimate reality. In face of the difficulty, inherent in idealism, of saying anything positive about the Absolute he is driven to assert that the propositions ascribing these qualities to reality are literally true in what they deny but only symbolically true in what they affirm. For instance,

" When we say that reality is a unity, we deny that there is a plurality of reals; and there is nothing merely symbolic about this negation. But in so far as we are also, in saying that reality is a unity, assigning to it a positive character, this positive character can only have symbolic significance. For no thinkable unity can be appropriate to the kind of unity that reality possesses."³⁴

In the same way ,

" Mind or spirit . . . cannot be more than a symbol of the perfect unity in difference that characterises the non-contradictory ultimate reality which we may for convenience designate 'the supreme being of metaphysics'.³⁵

Campbell finally draws together the three strands of his argument. The ultimate reality of metaphysics, the mysterium tremendum et fascinans of religious experience and the Lord God, the Moral Governor of the World are one. He believes that if theism be interpreted in supra-rational terms there is good corroboration for all the major articles of the theistic creed save one.³⁶ Constructive philosophy, in his view, can neither sustain nor refute specific divine manifestations in human experience. Critics may interpret Campbell's supra-rational symbolic theism as 'agnosticism in disguise' but he believes he is saying something meaningful about God for on his terms we cannot reach the supra-rational any other way than through the rational.³⁷

4. Personal Idealism

Immediately after the publication of Bosanquet's two volumes Pringle-Pattison lectured at Aberdeen on The Idea of God in the Light of Recent Philosophy. In the first course he discussed the thought of Hume and Kant and subsequent nineteenth century developments, reserving the second course for the criticism of the Absolute Idealism of Bradley and Bosanquet and the exposition of his own metaphysical system. Bosanquet's

description of the individual as merely adjectival and his view of God as a manifestation of the Absolute are not adequate, in Pringle-Pattison's judgment, to account for actual personal and religious experience. God and man are bound together not as aspects of the Absolute but as personalities in relationship. Man needs God as "Creator" but creation is not to be understood in any crude sense of the term; the world of nature is an eternal manifestation of God rather than his "creation". To speak of "the eternal purpose of God" is the most fitting description of the relation of the time-world to the divine totality.

" If the finite world means anything to God, the ideas of activity and purpose are indispensable. If he is not himself active in the process, he is no more than the Eternal Dreamer, and the whole time-world becomes the illusion which many absolutist systems pronounce it to be.³⁹"

So in a sense God needs man for the fulfilment of his eternal purpose. He is

" no God, or Absolute, existing in solitary bliss and perfection, but a God who lives in the perpetual giving of himself, who shares the life of his finite creatures, bearing in and with them the whole burden of their finitude, their sinful wanderings and sorrows, and the suffering without which they cannot be made perfect."⁴⁰

The Christian concept of God is the highest and truest but Pringle-Pattison considers that the doctrine of the Trinity

would be better understood as the profoundest and most intelligible attempt to express the indwelling of God in man rather than as a supra-rational mystery concerning the inner constitution of a transcendent Godhead.⁴¹ As we have seen this approach was developed later by C.A.Campbell.

On his second appointment at Edinburgh in 1922-23, Pringle-Pattison chose as his theme The Idea of Immortality. He is with Bosanquet and Keats in seeing the world as a vale of soul-making.⁴² Eternal life is the goal which may be experienced here and now or beyond what is called death. He differs from the Absolute Idealists who hold that the richness of the Absolute consists in the loss of identity of the individuals. For Pringle-Pattison and the Personal Idealists the value of the Absolute is enhanced by the interplay of individuals.

Clement Webb traversed similar ground at Aberdeen just after the first World War. The fundamental problem for Idealists is the relationship of God and the Absolute. We reach the Absolute by metaphysical speculation; we reach God through religious experience. Webb recognises that if our theism is to be satisfying the supreme God must also be the supreme Reality.⁴³ Making this identification involves the use of religious language within the sphere of metaphysics. Since religious language is frequently symbolic from time to time there may be need for a new symbolism or at least a

reinterpretation of the old.⁴⁴ Here we have once again a foreshadowing of C.A.Campbell's solution of the dilemma. Webb claims that to speak of a "personal" God is not another form of anthropomorphic theology.⁴⁵ Personality is seen in God not as something that depends on his relationship with man but as "a relation within the life of God himself".⁴⁶ A "personal" God is one with whom personal relationship is possible for his worshippers.⁴⁷ In Christianity we see most clearly what is meant by a personal God largely because of the doctrine of divine incarnation. Thus a satisfactory defence of a personal God can only be based on religious experience. It is difficult to see how we can reconcile the Supreme Reality of metaphysics and the God of religious experience except by an act of faith or a supra-rational theology, which is perhaps the same thing in the end.

5 Body, Mind and God

The body-mind relationship has been one of the tormenting problems of philosophy, and in a century in which so much had been discovered about the physical world a naturalistic solution of the problem was almost inevitable. At the beginning of the nineteenth century La Place had boasted to Napoleon that in his account of the universe any theistic hypothesis was superfluous. In spite of Paley and the Bridgewater treatises this view gained ground. Science would eventually be able to solve all mysteries that were worth solving and the rest could be safely left. So

in the closing years of the century James Ward could write of the theistic problem,

" Naturalism speaking in the name of science, declares the problem superfluous, and agnosticism, professing to represent reason, declares it to be insoluble."⁴⁸

In the true spirit of Lord Gifford James Ward set out to answer the arguments of naturalism and agnosticism. In 1896 when Ward opened his lectures at Aberdeen, psychology was still regarded as a branch of philosophy and not as a science. Ward was psychologist and philosopher. Although he is perhaps best known as the author of Psychological Principles, his Gifford lectures are metaphysical. He attempts to show that there is "more in heaven and in earth than is dreamt of by the naturalistic philosophy".⁴⁹ A mechanical or purely evolutionary explanation of the universe is merely an abstraction and therefore inadequate.⁵⁰ As a psychologist Ward was particularly interested in the body-mind relationship. Mind, he declares, is not amenable to mechanistic explanation. Man is rational and asks questions nature, which shows itself to be rational in the answers given. Thus finally, "the realm of Nature turns out to be a realm of Ends".⁵¹

The Realm of Ends was to be the title of Ward's lectures at St. Andrews some nine years later. In these lectures he developed his philosophical position which may be described as Spiritualistic Monism, which, he claims, is compatible with an empirical pluralism. Rudolf Metz sums up Ward's achievement

in this way :

" Pluralism finds its completion in theism. This crowning position of his system Ward reaches with a bold speculative leap from the finite and relative plurality of monads to an infinite and absolute unity. The existence of the many is grounded in and aims at the divine; God is both their source and their end. Theism is thus the base and crown of pluralism."⁵²

So once again but this time from a somewhat different approach we reach yet another variety of idealism. In common with other thinkers of his day/^{Ward} found a place for evolutionary development but God is at the beginning and not merely at the end. The world is not created just for the glory of God but is an expression of love.

" The world is God's self-limitation, self-renunciation might we venture to say ? And God is love. And what must the world be that is worthy of such love ? The only worthy object of love is just love. But love is free: in a ready made world then it could have no place. Only as we learn to know God do we learn to love him : hence the long and painful discipline of evolution, with its dying to live - the converse process of incarnation - the putting off of the earthly for the likeness of God."⁵³

This is the highest possible concept of the end for which the world came into being, and, Ward claims, it is no more than rational to believe the best.

G.F.Stout, like Ward, whose pupil he was, is better known for his studies in psychology. The Gifford lectureship afforded him the opportunity of systematising the findings of his earlier studies, which were mainly psychological, and to express his philosophical conclusions in a comprehensive work. Although the lectures were given in 1919-21, Mind and Matter was not published until 1931 and the second volume, God and Nature, appeared posthumously in 1952. In the first volume materialism is dismissed as an unsatisfactory explanation of the body-mind relationship. Mind is fundamental and, Stout holds,

" It is wrong to hold that matter can have a separate being and nature of its own which is in any manner or degree independent of the mind which creates it."⁵⁴

His final conclusions are in line with traditional idealism.

" Mind, as I maintain, must be fundamental in the Universe of Being and not derivative from anything that is not mind. If we discard mind-stuff theories as failing to account for individual selves, and monadism as failing to account for anything else, we are bound to posit one universal and eternal Mind developing and expressing itself in the world of finite and changeable beings which we call Nature."⁵⁵

The further problem of the relationship between God and Nature is reserved for the second volume. It could be that Nature itself is the Absolute Mind, but for Stout God is not to be identified with Nature; rather God is embodied in Nature.

Stout argues from the Unity of Knowledge and the Unity of the Universe to the existence of a Universal Mind. Not until the closing pages does he identify the Universal Mind and the God of theism.⁵⁶ No proof is claimed but Stout declares that the position is indeed "logically defensible".

The first world war generated a new interest in psychology not merely because of its therapeutic value but because of the strange mixture of motives that had proved to have power to move millions of people to act in a common cause. Because of this new interest Sir William Mitchell⁵⁷ chose as his subject at Aberdeen in 1924-26 the place and power of minds. The first course, published as The Place of Minds in the World, does not reach a point where any relevance to natural theology is apparent, though a purely materialistic concept of mind is dismissed. The second course dealt with the power of minds in the world, but the lectures have not been published.

6. Realist Metaphysics

While it is true that most of the earlier Gifford lecturers subscribed to an idealism of one form or another, other schools of thought were not unrepresented. Bergson, Alexander and Lloyd Morgan within a decade lectured at Edinburgh, Glasgow and St. Andrews respectively. They were moving away on the one hand from nineteenth century idealism and on the other from a purely mechanistic naturalism. Lloyd Morgan was

primarily a scientist, who saw metaphysics as something superimposed on science. He quotes Bergson with approval,

" Philosophy ought to follow science in order to superimpose on scientific truth a knowledge of another kind which may be called metaphysical."⁵⁸

Bergson's Gifford lectures were not completed owing to the outbreak of war, nor were such lectures as were given subsequently published. Undoubtedly Bergson's Creative Evolution influenced Alexander and Lloyd Morgan, widely different though their conclusions were.

Alexander saw metaphysics as an attempt "to describe the ultimate nature of existence if it has any."⁵⁹ Space Time and Deity is his attempt to build a framework within which the findings of science and the data of ordinary experience make sense. Space-Time is the foundation of this framework, and his own commentary brings out the distinction between space-time as a mathematical concept and space-time as a metaphysical idea. He tells us in the preface to a new impression of Space Time and Deity :

" The hypothesis of the book is that Space-Time is the stuff of which matter and all things are specifications. That the world does not exist in Space and Time, but in Space-Time, that is a world of events, has and had, even when I wrote, become common property through the mathematicians, with whom, as I suppose, the conception was a piece of scientific intuition. The method which

brought me to the same result was purely metaphysical, a piece of plodding analysis." ⁶⁰

There can be nothing beyond Space and Time. It is the primordial stuff out of which all existents are made. ⁶¹ Not even God is exempt from this condition. "Call it what you will, universe or God or the One, it is not above Space and Time." ⁶²

Under Alexander's guidance we arrive at the concept of God from two directions. On the one hand God is the object of the religious emotion just as food is the object of the appetite. ⁶³ Now we know independently that there is such a thing as food, but we cannot have the same satisfaction concerning the existence of God; it could be that the idea of God is a man-made satisfaction. Thus we need such confirmation of God's existence as metaphysics can afford. In this way it comes about that religion leans on metaphysics for the justification of the reality of its object, while philosophy leans on religion to justify calling what Alexander describes as "the possessor of deity" by the religious name of God. ⁶⁴ Thus,

" God is the whole world as possessing the quality of deity. Of such a being the whole world is the 'body' and deity is the 'mind'. But this possessor of deity is not actual but ideal. As an actual existent, God is the infinite world with its nisus towards deity, or, to adapt a phrase of Leibniz, as big in travail with deity." ⁶⁵

God is thus immanent in that he includes all finite existence but transcendent by nature of his deity. While religion will

conceive of God as existing here and now and everywhere, metaphysically God is emergent. God is Omega rather than Alpha, the terminus ad quem rather than the terminus a quo. This concept of God can never satisfy the religious consciousness, which as Clement Webb remarks⁶⁶, demands not merely a prospective but an actual God, who already possesses the nature we worship. Alexander's philosophy illustrates the difficulty that metaphysics always encounters. Unless the philosopher begins with a concept of God arising from faith and worship he is not likely to end with a metaphysical God who commands worship. The metaphysician must always be able to say at the end of his argument, as Aquinas did, "and this we call God".

Lloyd Morgan's metaphysical approach is similar to Alexander's in many respects. "Neither of them," wrote Rudolf Metz, "is pupil of the other, but both are masters, who in their works supplement, help and urge forward each other."⁶⁷ We need only concentrate here on their divergences. Where Alexander follows the way of "plodding analysis" to reach his ultimate conclusions, Lloyd Morgan acknowledges his personal religious conviction at the outset.

"For better or worse, while I hold that the proper attitude of naturalism is strictly agnostic, therewith I, for one, cannot rest content. For better or worse, I acknowledge God as the Nisus through whose Activity emergents emerge, and the whole course of emergent

evolution is directed. Such is my philosophic creed, supplementary to my scientific policy of interpretation."⁶⁸

Lloyd Morgan tells us that in the presence of a mystery a mystical approach is inevitable. The Divine Purpose is revealed in the passing life of man.⁶⁹ It is not enough to acknowledge God as part of emergent evolution, as above and beyond; we must also intuitively enjoy His activity within us.⁷⁰ Lloyd Morgan ^{is saying} little more than Alexander, who wrote,

" Were the passion towards God not already lit, no speculative contemplation or proof of the existence or attributes of a metaphysical God would make him worshipful."⁷¹

Yet it is quite clear that for Alexander the God of religion does not yet "exist" while for Lloyd Morgan the God of emergent evolution is also the God of religious experience. We should note that while Alexander claims that his conclusions are purely metaphysical Lloyd Morgan acknowledges the religious nature of his assertions. This supports the Kantian view of the function of natural theology in respect to faith. It may support a faith derived from another source but it is impotent to create one.

When Whitehead speaks of the creativity of the world as the throbbing emotion of the past hurling itself into new transcendent fact,⁷² we recognise immediately that we are still in the world of Alexander and Lloyd Morgan. Whitehead's universe

is an organism within which all the parts are mutually dependent, and in Process and Reality, the Gifford lectures of 1927-28, this metaphysic of organism is worked out in great detail. Speculative philosophy must interpret every element in our experience and therefore religious experience must find a place. "Philosophy may not neglect the multifariousness of the world - the fairies dance, and Christ is nailed to the Cross."⁷³ So if people do worship or claim what they call religious experience then any metaphysical scheme must recognise these facts, even if ultimately they are dismissed as illusions.

The three images of God, familiar to western thought, - the imperial ruler, the personification of moral energy, the ultimate philosophical principle - are dismissed. Whitehead continues :

" There is however, in the Galilean origin of Christianity yet another suggestion which does not fit very well with any of the three main strands of thought. It does not emphasize the ruling Caesar, or the ruthless moralist, or the unmoved mover. It dwells upon the tender elements in the world, which slowly and in quietness operate by love; and it finds purpose in the present immediacy of a kingdom not of this world. Love neither rules, nor is it unmoved; also it is a little oblivious as to morals."⁷⁴

Whitehead offers no proof of the being and nature of God, but

offers his speculations, adding, as it were, "another speaker to that masterpiece, Hume's Dialogues concerning Natural Religion".⁷⁵ There are two phases of the being and nature of God described as primordial and consequent. As primordial God is described as "the unlimited conceptual realization of the absolute wealth of potentiality". He is not before all creation but with all creation, and here we are reminded of Alexander's God particularly when God is described by Whitehead as "deficiently actual". The primordial nature is constituted by his "conceptual experience" and in that sense is deficiently actual. His consequent nature originates with physical experience within the temporal world.

" It is determined, incomplete, consequent, 'everlasting', fully actual and conscious. His necessary goodness expresses the determination of his consequent nature."⁷⁶

God is described as saving the world as it passes into the immediacy of his own life; there is a tender care that nothing be lost. God is the poet of the world, with tender patience leading it by his vision of truth, beauty and goodness.⁷⁷

In the concluding paragraphs of Process and Reality Whitehead describes the four creative phases in which the universe accomplishes actuality. The first is conceptual origination; the second a temporal phase of physical origination; in the third phase of perfected actuality the multiplicity of phase

two gives way to unity - the many become one. The final phase can best be described in Whitehead's own words :

" The action of the fourth phase is the love of God for the world. It is the particular providence for particular occasions. What is done in the world is transformed into a reality in heaven, and the reality in heaven passes back into the world. By reason of this reciprocal relation, the love in the world passes into the love in heaven, and floods back again into the world. In this sense, God is the great companion - the fellow-sufferer who understands." ⁷⁸

Because the love of the world passes back into the love of heaven the craving for immortality is satisfied. Our immediate actions take on importance because in some sense they pass into the Being of God. Whitehead often uses the language of orthodoxy and has sometimes been hailed as a Christian philosopher, but as soon as he declares that "it is as true to say that God creates the World, as that the World creates God" he parts company with Christian orthodoxy. E.L.Mascall, who recognises the valuable insights of Whitehead's work suggests that if he had taken Christian scholasticism as seriously as he takes the ancient Greeks, Whitehead might well have gone far towards providing the modern philosophical world with an urgently needed synthesis.⁷⁹ The speculative philosophy of Alexander, Lloyd Morgan and Whitehead underlines the

problem involved in substituting a metaphysically produced God for the God of religion.

7. Pragmatism

William James popularised Pragmatism and in his Gifford lectures set out to demonstrate the psychological value of religious experience. For the pragmatist the proof of the pudding is in the eating and if it is good for a man to be religious then for that man religion is true. James is prepared to say that God is real since he produces real effects,⁸⁰ and in the closing chapter of Varieties he declares that while he has no philosophical justification for what he calls his over-belief it is in living by this over-belief that he finds satisfaction. But the God he believes in is not necessarily the sole ruler of the universe. He writes,

" I believe the pragmatic way of taking religion to be the deeper way. It gives it body as well as soul, it makes its claim, as everything real must claim, some characteristic realm of fact as its very own. What the more characteristically divine facts are, apart from the actual inflow of energy in the faith-state and the prayer-state, I know not. But the over-belief on which I am prepared to make my personal venture is that they exist."⁸¹

This may indeed be a satisfying religious faith, but it does not offer any metaphysical justification for asserting the existence of God.

While William James's pragmatism led him to a religious faith the pragmatism of John Dewey, who lectured at Edinburgh in 1929, led to something more like positivism. The aim of life is purely practical. When man is questing for certainty it is not because he wants to solve speculative problems but because practical issues are involved. Dewey sees the pragmatic approach to reality as a Copernican revolution, "which looks to security amid change instead of to certainty in attachment to the fixed".⁸² The old centre was mind seeking certainty in the unchangeable, whereas,

" The new centre is indefinite interactions taking place within a course of nature which is not fixed and complete, but which is capable of direction to new and different results through the mediation of intentional operations."⁸³

When Dewey describes the revolution as being "from knowing as an outsider to knowing as an active participant in the drama of an on-moving world"⁸⁴ we are very near to the language of existentialism. Traditionally religion with its belief in an unchanging God and a fixed creed had provided one way to certainty in a transitory world. Science gives us instrumental knowledge but it is a mistake to expect scientific knowledge to substantiate moral and religious beliefs. In any case, Dewey claims, knowledge is not the be-all and end-all of life, the only means of access to the real. We meet the real in all the activities of life, in thought and feeling and supremely in

action. The religion we reach under Dewey's guidance is much attenuated. It is "devoted to inspiration and cultivation of the sense of ideal possibilities in the actual".⁸⁵ It thus provides no certain knowledge of God or of the universe but offers a challenge to action. In his concluding paragraph Dewey defines the task of philosophy as he sees it:

" It has to search out and disclose the obstructions; to criticize the habits of mind that stand in the way; to focus reflection upon needs congruous to present life; to interpret the conclusions of science with respect to their consequences for our beliefs about purposes and values in all phases of life."⁸⁶

Dewey's philosophy has much in common with the moral theory expounded some years later by his fellow countryman, R.B.Perry.

8. Tentative Conclusion

The question, " Canst thou by metaphysics find out God?" seems destined to receive a negative answer. The idealist philosophers come nearest to showing us God, but on closer examination we find that they ^{with the assumption} begin/that there is one comprehensive purpose embodied in the Absolute, so that they either show us a God who is less than the Absolute or simply add to the Absolute the Thomist formula "and this we call God". On their own metaphysical theory it is impossible to prove the existence of a real God who corresponds to any appearance we may have discovered. The most they claim to do is to demonstrate

the existence of God in Laurie's sense of "pointing him out" or "showing him to be there". Or, they can show that there is nothing self-contradictory about the idea of God.

The realist metaphysicians fail for a different reason. It would be easier to worship the Absolute than the emerging developing God of Alexander or Whitehead. Lloyd Morgan's concept of God is more acceptable to the traditional theist, but on his own admission Lloyd Morgan's God is the object of faith rather than the product of metaphysical thinking. In the same way William James acknowledges that personal conclusions about the being of God rest upon "over-belief". If Dewey's conclusions are disappointing to the theist he at least has the merit of not producing the God of religious faith in any metaphysical disguise. William James was clearly aware of the limitations of metaphysical argument. Religion cannot be based on reason alone; the religious man goes the extra mile. In James's view it is important that we should recognise our "over-beliefs". "Most of us pretend," he says, "in some way to prop it upon our philosophy, but the philosophy itself is really propped upon the faith."⁸⁷ If this is true then we must question any metaphysical conclusions whether they lead to theism or atheism.

The straightforward answer to our question is that if we could find out God through metaphysics more philosophers would be theists. Metaphysical thought may be likened to a

computer. If we feed in faith then faith will be expressed in some way in the answer we get. If we feed in scepticism, unbelief will appear in the conclusion. If we feed in "nonsense" then presumably the modern computer has some way of throwing it back at us! Metaphysics is capable of building an edifice on the basis of faith; metaphysics may also construct a system into which we can build our faith; metaphysical thought may throw back theological propositions as nonsense. Whether we can identify any of these functions as natural theology must await further discussion.

Part 1. Chapter 2.

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Chapter Four

Natural Theology, Science and Cosmology

1	Theologia Naturalis	page 106
2	Theistic Arguments	107
3	Science and Natural Theology	111
4	Evidence from Biology	114
5	The Neutrality of Science	118
6	Science and the Christian Faith	120
7	Towards a New Approach	123
8	Tentative Conclusions	126
	Reference Notes	128

1. Theologia Naturalis

Raymond de Sabunde, an early exponent of Natural Theology, published his Theologia Naturalis in 1438. It is an infallible science, he tells us, and one that "anyone can acquire in a month and without labour".¹ Its main concern is to take the findings of science and, by a process of of induction, to show that there is design and therefore, by a process of deduction, a designer. Francis Bacon gave a similar interpretation of natural theology :

" Natural Theology is rightly called also Divine Philosophy. It is defined as that spark of knowledge of God which may be had in the light of nature and the consideration of created things; and thus can fairly be held to be divine in respect to its object, and natural in respect of its source of information."²

William Derham's Boyle Lectures for 1713 were entitled, Physico-Theology: a Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God from His Works of Creation. In this period high-sounding names like Astrotheology, Hydrotheology, Ornithotheology, and Pyrotheology³ were coined to describe the evidences of God to be found in the various spheres of natural science. Paley, in the same tradition, concluded :

" The marks of Design are too strong to be gotten over. Design must have a designer. That designer must be a

person. That person is God. It is an immense conclusion, there is a God."⁴

By the will of the Earl of Bridgewater the President of the Royal Society was under obligation to appoint a person or persons to produce a work

" On the Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of God, as manifested in the Creation; illustrating such work by all reasonable arguments, as for instance the variety and formation of God's creatures in the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms; the effect of digestion, and thereby of conversion; the construction of the hand of man, and an infinite variety of other arguments; as also by discoveries ancient and modern, in arts, sciences, and the whole extent of literature."⁵

Adam Gifford was a child of his century in the implicit faith he placed in science and scientific method in his attempt to provide reasoned support for theism. The very first lecturer at Edinburgh dismissed any naive dependence on science, when he declared that "the very tallest American, with the very tallest^{9f} telescopes will never be able to say that he spied out God".⁶ It was inevitable however that the appeal to science should be made again and again and that the traditional arguments for the existence of God should be discussed by Gifford lecturers.

2. Theistic Arguments

Hutcheson Stirling, the first Edinburgh lecturer, discussed

the traditional arguments in his first series. In the second course he dealt with criticisms of the arguments with particular reference to Hume, Kant and Darwin. In spite of the criticisms Stirling still found the proofs satisfying. He declares :

" The three proofs are but the single wave in the rise of the soul, through the Trinity of the Universe, up to the unity of God."⁷

And again :

" The very thought of God is of that which is, and cannot not-be."⁸

Stirling still lived in the world of Hegel.

A few years later at Glasgow A.B. Bruce approached the same subject from a slightly different angle. He recognised that evolutionary theories had weakened the teleological argument in its earlier form. Withdrawing from the field of natural science he considered the possibility of confining the argument from design to man's moral and spiritual development. Evolution might apply there also, but he saw evolution as part of the design, not degrading man in the least.

" Man, considered as in his whole being the child of evolution, instead of being a stumbling-block to faith, is rather the key to all mysteries, revealing at once the meaning of the universe, the nature of God, and his own destiny."⁹

In the broad sweep of history, in man's place in the universe, in providence revealed in individual life, in the solidarity of

the race, in election and in suffering Bruce finds the evidence to support the theistic position. In his second series he dealt with the idea of providence in Buddhism and Zoroastrianism, in Greek, Hebrew and Christian thought and in certain more recent thinkers, notably Robert Browning. Bruce's arguments are not theistic proofs. Rather he provides a well-ordered demonstration that the idea of Providence is not incompatible with evolution and that the Christian doctrine of Providence is the most acceptable, satisfying alike the demands of heart, conscience and reason.¹⁰ Bruce was a biblical scholar rather than a philosopher. His views on biblical criticism met with disapproval in the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland and his ready acceptance of evolutionary theories can scarcely have passed without criticism in the last decade of the nineteenth century.

In 1914 A.J. Balfour, a self-confessed amateur philosopher but nevertheless a profound thinker, turned his attention to the problems of design and purpose in the universe. The theory of natural selection had not made it harder to believe in design but had made it easier to believe in chance.¹¹ Balfour thought that he had found a pattern within the design that could not be explained by chance or by mechanical laws.

" In a strictly determined physical system, depending on the laws of matter and energy alone, no room has been found, and no room can be found, for psychical states

at all. They are novelties, whose intrusion into the material world cannot be denied, but whose presence and behaviour cannot be explained by the laws which the world obeys."¹²

The argument finally rests on the values that emerge from man's reactions to the natural world. The design is far deeper and richer than any of the adjustments due to natural selection.¹³

The theistic arguments have been discussed many times in passing but half a century was to elapse after Stirling's inaugural lectures before John Laird undertook what might be termed a full-scale examination of the proofs in 1939-40. His lectures were subsequently published under the titles Theism and Cosmology and Mind and Deity. After discussing various descriptions of natural theology Laird chose the term "philosophical theism" to describe the exercise. This, he claims, is just another name for natural theology.¹⁴ Such a theism has the liberty of all philosophy of "following the argument whithersoever it may lead". In the former volume Laird discusses the cosmological and teleological arguments and concludes that neither is adequate to establish theism, even though it may still be reasonable to believe what is not demonstrable. In Mind and Deity Laird takes the Ontological argument as his starting point. Contrasting the attitudes of Kant and Hegel, Laird concludes that the argument is a sham but that nevertheless what he calls the Grand Ontological Assertion may be the last word in metaphysical insight. Finally Laird examines the moral

proofs of theism and points out that such arguments and Kant's in particular are speculative constructions rather than proofs. His final judgment however is not unfavourable to theism. He concludes :

" While I do not think that any theistic argument is conclusive, and am of opinion that very few theistic proofs establish a high degree of probability, I also incline to the belief that theistic metaphysics is stronger than most, and that metaphysics is not at all weak in principle despite the strain that it puts on the human intellect. It is quite impossible, I believe, to refute theism. A verdict of "not proven" is easier to obtain, largely because proof is so difficult and its standards so exacting. If plausibility were enough, theism is much more plausible than most other metaphysical conclusions."¹⁵

The half century had been more than sufficient to undermine the optimism expressed by Lord Gifford and the confidence of the first Edinburgh lecturer in the validity of theistic arguments.

3. Science and Natural Theology

It is quite understandable that the trustees at the several universities should turn to the scientists to help to solve the problems raised by Lord Gifford. It had become increasingly clear that the natural theologian, concerned with the "why" of the universe, must turn to the scientist for knowledge of the "how". Both questions must be asked if design and purpose are to be established. Etienne Gilson wrote :

" Knowledge of the why, even if it were possible, could in no sense dispense us from seeking the how - and that is all that concerns science . . . but, if anyone looks only for

the how, can he be surprised if he fails to find the why?¹⁶
 Thus a number of scientists have been invited from time to time to discuss the how and the why of the universe.

The immediate successor of Stirling at Edinburgh was Sir George G. Stokes, an Irishman, physicist and mathematician, one time Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge. In the spirit of the Gifford terms he claimed the right to apply the scientific method of "hypothesis" to natural theology,

" by assuming for trial the truth of a statement made on whatever authority it may be, and then examining whether the supposition of its truth so falls in with such knowledge as we possess, or such phenomena as we observe, as to lead us to a conviction that the statement does indeed express the truth. It may be that the statement comes from a source which professes to be a revelation made from God to man."¹⁷

Stokes is confessedly a Christian so that for him natural theology is the examination of his faith in the light of reason. This gives a clue as to the possible function of natural theology if it is once accepted that theistic proof is unattainable. It should be added that faith is more than the acceptance of a possible hypothesis, and Henry Jones says this clearly,

" For the scientific man to convert his hypothesis into a faith were to betray the very spirit of science. A hypothesis must not turn into a dogma, and the scientific man is the servitor of no creed. Hypotheses, consequently, can not transform character . . . The sciences may conjecture, religion must "know" : that is to say it must be a matter experienced." ¹⁹

Nevertheless a man may treat his faith as a hypothesis for the purpose of testing its validity. Thus the "design" that Stokes found in the solar system and the human eye might confirm a faith already established but could not produce proof. At the end of his second series of lectures G.G.Stokes expressed his profound dissatisfaction with Lord Gifford's exclusion of reference to revealed religion. He could not approve the divorce of natural theology and revealed religion. What if the answers to the questions set by Lord Gifford should actually be found in revealed religion? At least we should examine the evidence in the light of reason. So Stokes concluded :

" In the study of natural theology we are not to shut our eyes to such light as may be thrown upon the subject by revealed religion, or to refuse to entertain for trial some solution of a difficulty felt by natural theology on the ground that the solution in question involves the supernatural. On the other hand, in the study of revealed religion we are not to reject the exercise of the moral faculties in forming our judgment as to whether what is asserted to be revealed is really so, and is rightly interpreted." ²⁰

This view is echoed by later Gifford lecturers and is one to which we shall need to return later.

Emile Boutroux, Professor Philosophy in the University of Paris, lectured at Glasgow in 1903 on La Nature et L'Esprit. The original lectures have not been published but it is thought that much of the material is embodied in Boutroux's Science et Religion dans la philosophie contemporaine, published in 1908

and in its English translation in 1909.²¹ In an introductory chapter Boutroux surveys the conflicts between religion and science from early times to the present day and then devotes the remainder of the volume to a careful analysis of "The Naturalistic Tendency" and "The Spiritualistic Tendency". Boutroux draws a clear line of demarcation between the truths of religion and the truths of science and concludes that while strife may temper both there can be no final reconciliation between the two approaches, which is another way of saying that we cannot draw religious conclusions from scientific premisses, nor can we draw scientific conclusions from religious premisses. This still needs saying.

4. Evidence from Biology

Hans Driesch of Heidelberg recognised the demarcation between natural science and natural theology but concluded that it was permissible to cross from the realm of science to that of metaphysics so long as clear acknowledgement of the fact is made. He describes the transition in this way :

" We shall study the phenomena of living organisms analytically, by the aid of experiment; our principal object will be to find out laws in these phenomena; such laws will then be further analysed, and precisely at that point we shall leave the realm of natural science proper."²²

The first volume of Driesch's work is a biological treatise on morphogenesis, adaptation and inheritance, concluding with a survey of some nineteenth century evolutionary theories. The biological study is concluded in the second volume, the main part of which is an exposition of Driesch's philosophy of organism, which he

terms "Vitalism". This is an exercise in metaphysical speculation rather than a religious faith, but one which is compatible with a religious faith.

J. Arthur Thomson, Professor of Natural History at Aberdeen, lectured at St. Andrews in 1915-16 on The System of Animate Nature. This was a similar teleological study and the general conclusion much the same as Driesch's. Thomson claims that purpose is revealed in nature and in spite of the problem of evil man is the crown of creation. He does not claim to have proved the existence of God, but the purpose discerned in nature may help to confirm a faith already held.

J.S.Haldane, another biologist, dismissed the vitalistic theories of his predecessor, Hans Driesch, and pointed out the problems involved in basing any philosophy purely on scientific data. He writes :

" The only world which the Sciences appear to be capable of representing to us is not consistent with itself. Not merely mathematical, physical and biological Science, but Science of any kind, fails to furnish us with what we can describe as objective truth. When we examine the body of knowledge presented to us by each science, we find that though it is logically consistent it only corresponds partially or imperfectly with our actual experience. In other words it does not represent actual reality, but only a subjective picture of reality. If we take it to represent actual reality, and suppose that the representation constitutes realism, we are only mistaking a form of subjective idealism for realism. Thus Science brings us to a point at which we require more than science."²³

In the second part of his book he deals with this "more than science" and attempts to reconcile science, religion and philosophy. The philosopher is seen as the critic alike of the scientist and the theologian. Haldane claims that his own naturalistic religion is quite compatible with the findings of science. Lord Gifford's conditions provided no difficulty for Haldane, who had hard things to say about those, who, in his opinion bolster up bad theology with bad science. He declared:

" I am not here to support what seems to me an unsatisfactory theology, but to carry out to the best of my ability the intention of the founder of the Gifford lectureships. I can put my heart into this attempt because no-one can feel more strongly than I do that religion is the greatest thing in life, and that behind the recognized Churches there is an unrecognized Church to which all may belong, though supernatural events play no part in its creed."²⁴

Here of course we have a clear statement of faith rather than a conclusion from science. Haldane is really declaring that life is more than biology and the body more than chemistry, but we learn this from what biology and chemistry don't tell us rather than from what they do.

Man on His Nature is a philosophical and scientific study of the human organism, written by Sir Charles Sherrington who lectured at Edinburgh in 1937-38. Illustrations showing the fine mechanism of the cat's ear, the design of the human egg, the egg of the sea-urchin and the development of the malarial parasite add to the vividness of the argument. Sherrington stressed the

the evidence of design and harmony which he believed supported his view of the spiritual nature of reality but he did not pretend to have arrived at any proof of God's existence. Thus :

" One thing we can discern about Nature as a factor in this question, an element in this situation; at least it is a harmony . . . That we should have attained that knowledge, that it should be given us to apprehend that, that we can follow its being that, can hear it, trace it, retrace it in part and even forecast it as such, is an inexpressibly estimable good."²⁵

" Even should mind in the cataclysm of Nature be doomed to disappear and man's mind with it, man will have had his compensation: to have glimpsed a coherent world and himself an item in it. To have heard for a moment a harmony wherein he is a note. And to listen to the harmony is to commune with its composer?"²⁶

Sherrington is not far from the Hegelian kingdom of God. The question mark at the end of the passage is significant. In the second edition (1951) the sentence is omitted. Sherrington only reaches what he calls Natural Religion. Man is the product of nature, the only reasoning being in nature, and therefore the only mad one. He has discovered for himself love and hate, reason and madness, the moral and the immoral. He has eaten of the tree of knowledge of good and evil and the true expression of this natural religion will be in loving where love can be felt - in loving one another. The quest for meaning in the universe is, in a measure, its own satisfaction. In all these conclusions Sherrington has crossed the Driesch frontier from scientific fact to metaphysical speculation.

5. The Neutrality of Science

E.W.Hobson, a pure mathematician, lectured at Aberdeen in 1921-22 on The Domain of Natural Science. His survey is wider than the mainly biological studies of Driesche, Thomson and Sherrington; he discusses scientific law as manifested in mathematics, dynamics, thermodynamics as well as biology, turning finally to the relevance of scientific findings to the traditional theistic arguments. He is less confident than some of his predecessors in the help to be derived from science.

" It may be held that Natural Science provides a most important part of the justification for the ascription of complete rationality to the real ground of the phenomenal world. But the limitation must be fully recognized, and this postulation of complete rationality of the real goes far beyond anything that has been, or can be, unimpeachably established by Natural Science."²⁷

Natural science cannot provide more than indicative evidence and never demonstrative proof of a theory concerning the whole of nature simply because scientific investigation is always incomplete. The same stricture must apply to any attempt at establishing a teleological argument on the basis of natural science. Such argument may provide us with a tentative hypothesis, but it cannot provide us with a living faith or open to us the secret of the universe. "The man of science, as such," declares Professor Hobson, " is not even concerned with that secret."²⁸

A similar warning was to be given by Eddington. It had been widely thought from earliest times that the stars could

throw light on theology, and it was inevitable that the astronomers should be called to give evidence in the Gifford court. Eddington was their first representative in 1927 at Edinburgh. In his lecture on "Pointer Readings" he made it clear that his science has little to say about what happened when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy. Science conducts only a partial investigation of the meaning of the universe; it transforms human experience into pointer readings, and if only pointer readings are fed into the scientific machine then we cannot grind out anything more than pointer readings.²⁹ Eddington likens the task of the scientist to the working out of a huge jig-saw puzzle. The scientist knows that some pieces fit together, but he is not always sure which way up the picture is. Even when he has finished his picture is only a two-dimensional representation of a world of three or more dimensions.

" The scientist has his guesses as to how the finished picture will work out; he depends largely on these in his search for other pieces to fit; but his guesses are modified from time to time by unexpected developments as the fitting proceeds. These revolutions of thought as to the final picture do not cause the scientist to lose faith in his handiwork, for he is aware that the complete portion is growing steadily. Those who look over his shoulder and use the present partially developed picture for purposes outside science, do so at their own risk."³⁰

Even if the scientist's picture could be completed it would remain nothing more than a scientific picture, significant for

for religion, but demonstrative of nothing more than design. As Eddington points out, it is as well that a man's faith in God should not be based on something like the Quantum Theory which might be swept away in the next scientific revolution. Science is neutral.

6. Science and the Christian Faith

Among the lecturers who approach natural theology from the viewpoint of science are two churchmen, Bishop Barnes and Canon Raven. Barnes's Scientific Theory and Religion is an abstruse discussion of space-time, relativity, theories of matter and the origin of life, the evolution of plant and animal life and the place of our world within the universe. Science is public knowledge of the world as opposed to private and subjective impressions. It cannot take into account intuitions unless these are subject to confirmation in the form of hypotheses. Nor can theology be based simply on spiritual insights.

" Man is the outcome of Nature's processes. He is a product of the general scheme of the Universe. No one of his faculties is entirely independent of his ancestry and environment. Without exaggeration we can assert that man's spiritual experience is as unreal as a dream unless the God to Whom it leads him is also the God whose nature is shewn in the Universe as a whole."³¹

As the argument proceeds it appears that the Bishop is not denying the authority of spiritual insight but only the authority of alleged insight which proves to be at cross purposes with

scientific truth. The Bishop believes that the study of theology begins with a study of science. He examines the scientific world picture, finds it impossible to draw religious conclusions, and falls back on religious experience. If we ask why we cannot go directly to religious experience in the first instance, Bishop Barnes replies that it is a dangerous procedure.

" Spiritual exaltation which is built on falsehood is an evil thing. The great religious teacher is one in whom religious emotion is not only strong but also pure; and who, to preserve its purity, is quick to test by the dry light of reason the knowledge which such emotion seems to give him."³²

It might not be an unfair use of Eddington's analogy to suggest that spiritual insight may complete the scientist's picture by putting in the straight-edged pieces - providing the framework. What has happened in the past is that the theologian has claimed to have all the straight-edged pieces and then the scientist has found so many more pieces that the neat framework provided by the dogmatic theologian broke up. Straight-edged pieces may be a useful guide but the theologian must not assume that he has found all his pieces! As the scientist's picture broadens so the theologian may have to look for more pieces to create a framework big enough for the picture. This is the moral of Bishop Barnes's Gifford lectures.

Any jig-saw puzzle addict knows what difficulties arise when two people join in solving the one puzzle. The occasional

advantages of the situation must be weighed against the controversies that arise over the placing of some particular piece or section. Canon Raven's first volume, Science and Religion, deals with the efforts of the scientist and the theologian to build a world-picture from the earliest creation myths to the time of Darwin. Canon Raven mourns the fact that religion as represented by the church has so often cut itself off from the findings of science particularly when they disturbed an accepted position of theology. There have been, of course, exceptional individuals like St. Albert, who recognised that science and theology are dealing with the same world. In the closing lecture of the first series, Canon Raven surveyed, what he called in 1951, the new situation. The scientist, he claims, is much less confident and he quotes Heisenberg who had recently declared that

" at present the four hypotheses associated with the names of Newton, Riemann, Einstein and Planck must all be accepted as appropriate to different groups of phenomena."³³

The rigid mechanical view of science had disappeared. The Gifford lectures of Alexander, Lloyd Morgan and Whitehead had underlined the process. Temple's Nature Man and God had seemed to mark the beginning of a new reconciliation between science and religion. Barthian reaction, however, had stayed progress.

" Just when a synthesis was becoming possible, Christians who were surely committed to the integration of experience and of life seemed to be retiring into their own ivory towers, cells and catacombs."³⁴

In his second volume, Experience and Interpretation, Canon Raven calls for a new reformation. This New Reformation would gather up all the thinking of science and theology but in the end we are left to walk by faith.

7. Towards a new approach

Heisenberg has since made his own contribution to the Gifford discussion in his lectures at St. Andrews in 1955-56, which have been published as Physics and Philosophy. He does not reach even the beginning of a theistic argument. He recognises that there are some forms of thought that do not fit into the close frame of scientific thought. In other words, it looks as if there might be something in religion, but the scientist as scientist will still be sceptical.

"Modern Physics," he declares, "has in many ways increased this scepticism; but it has at the same time turned it against the overestimation of precise scientific concepts, against scepticism itself."³⁵

The concepts of mind, the human soul, life or God belong to what Heisenberg calls natural language, having immediate connection with reality, and therefore not amenable to scientific analysis. The best that science can do is to save us from gross errors in our religious assertions, and finally make its contribution to a general "unification and widening of our present world". Modern scientific thought, according to Heisenberg, at least leads to humility and tolerance of other men's ideas.

Bishop Barnes had emphasised that science is public knowledge, but Michael Polanyi's thesis challenged this generally

accepted assumption in Personal Knowledge : Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy, based on the Aberdeen lectures of 1951-52. He writes in his preface :

" I start by rejecting the ideal of scientific detachment. In the exact sciences, this false ideal is perhaps harmless, for it is in fact disregarded there by scientists. But we shall see that it exercises a destructive influence in biology, psychology and sociology, and falsifies the whole outlook far beyond the domain of science."³⁶

He proceeds to demonstrate that the scientist's personal participation is inextricably involved in science itself. His knowledge is not and never can be impersonal. Polanyi contrasts the "impersonal" knowledge of the scientist and the kind of knowledge claimed by the religious man and comments :

" The book of Genesis and its great pictorial illustrations, like the frescoes of Michaelangelo, remain a far more intelligent account of the nature and origin of the universe, than the representation of the world as a chance collocation of atoms."³⁷

Polanyi finally reaches a form of teleology. Man, he finds, is the only centre of thought and responsibility in the universe. So far the human mind has been the ultimate stage in the awakening of the universe, but there is, he believes, some further far-off divine event.

" All that has gone before, the strivings of a myriad centres that have taken the risks of living and believing, seem to have all been pursuing, along rival lines, the aim now achieved by us up to this point. . . We may envisage then a cosmic field which called forth all these centres

by offering them a short-lived, limited, hazardous opportunity for making some progress of their own towards an unthinkable consummation. And that is also, I believe, how a Christian is placed when worshipping God." ³⁸

For Polanyi, as for Sherrington, man is the centre of his own universe. Scientifically he can investigate and analyse and sketch a two-dimensional picture of what he finds. But when he has sketched his picture or fitted together his jig-saw puzzle he may find that he is not in it himself.

" Then law is no more than what the courts decide, art but an emollient for nerves, morality but a convention, tradition but an inertia, God but a psychological necessity. Then man dominates a world in which he himself does not exist." ³⁹

The picture that science has traditionally drawn is partial and incomplete. Man himself is part of the picture - a living piece of the jig-saw puzzle.

In his recently published book, The Relevance of Science, the Glasgow lectures for 1959-60, C.F. von Weizsäcker, made an historical survey of scientific thought and in a final chapter attempted a diagnosis for the present times. Faith in science, he finds, is the dominant religion of our time, yet there are more open questions in science than ever before. Christianity must come to terms with science. He concludes,

" Science has come into being and will, to judge by human standards, endure; in face of it there remains only the task of interpreting Christianity in a way credible to a thought schooled in it." ⁴⁰

Science provides the tools of modern rationality.

8. Tentative Conclusions

We have travelled a long way from the natural theology of Raymond de Sabunde, whose science could be acquired in a month and without labour. We have surveyed the work of seventeen Gifford lecturers who have struggled with the problem of wresting from the physical world evidence for the existence of God. To this number more could be added who faced the problem in the course of a larger project or whose approach was more strictly metaphysical.

During the period covered by the lectures there has been less and less confidence shown in the ability of science to provide evidence for theistic belief. What confidence there was in the teleological argument at the beginning of the period has steadily diminished. Any hopes Lord Gifford had of establishing a science of Infinite Being were to be disappointed. On the question of the existence of God Science, as science, must be neutral.

Similarly confidence in science as the gateway to all knowledge has diminished. There has been an increasing recognition that science deals with only one aspect of reality. It can only produce, as it were, a two-dimensional Mercator's projection of a world of many dimensions. The scientist may be sceptical of the other dimensions he is unable to understand, but if Heisenberg is right, he is also sceptical of scepticism.

The religious man must accept the scientist's account of the universe for what it is. At certain points scientific facts may make it easier to believe in God; at others they make it easier to believe in chance. The religious man cannot unload his burden of decision upon the infallible scientist, who, in any case, can only give a partial picture and cannot produce a living faith out of test-tubes. The scientist indeed may produce evidence for design but there will be more than one hypothesis to explain the design.

What the Gifford lecturers have shown is that the scientific evidence is not incompatible with belief in God and in a limited way may support this belief. If we are to separate the functions of science and religion Gilson's demarcation is as useful as any; science deals with How? and religion deals with Why? We have to remember that the two questions are asked about the same world and therefore it will be well for the dialogue between the scientist and the theologian to continue.

<u>Part 1. Chapter 4.</u>	<u>Reference Notes</u>
1 <u>G.75.</u> p.20 See also Montaigne's Essay "An Apologie of Raymond Sebond".	21 Davidson, <u>Recent Theistic Discussion</u> , p.206
2 De Augm. iii 2	22 <u>G.30.</u> Vol. 1. p. 10
3 See <u>G.52.</u> pp.482-3	23 <u>G.44.</u> p. 172
4 Paley, <u>Evidences</u> (1805) p.480. end of ch.23.	24 <u>G.44.</u> p.311
5 T.Chalmers, <u>On the Power, Wisdom and Goodness of God &c.</u> , 1834, Vol1. p. ix	25 <u>G.87.</u> p.400
6 <u>G.90.</u> p.33	26 <u>G.87.</u> p.401
7 <u>G.90.</u> p.319	27 <u>G.48.</u> p.488
8 <u>G.90.</u> p.319	28 <u>G.48.</u> p.501
9 <u>G.16.</u> p.48	29 <u>G.31.</u> p.252
10 <u>G.17.</u> p. 277	30 <u>G.31.</u> pp. 352-3
11 <u>G.4.</u> p. 35	31 <u>G.6.</u> p. 5
12 <u>G.4.</u> p. 41	32 <u>G.6.</u> p.635
13 <u>G.4.</u> p. 51	33 <u>G.83.</u> Vol. 1. p.191
14 <u>G.55.</u> p.39	34 <u>G.83.</u> Vol. 1. p.202
15 <u>G.56.</u> pp. 319-320	35 <u>G.46.</u> p. 172
16 <u>G.41.</u> p. 105	36 <u>G.78.</u> p. vii
17 <u>G.91.</u> Vol. 1. p.3	37 <u>G.78.</u> p. 284
18 <u>G.91.</u> Vol. 1. p.270	38 <u>G.78.</u> p. 405
19 <u>G.53.</u> p. 83	39 <u>G.78.</u> p. 380
20 <u>G.91.</u> Vol. 2. p.258	40 <u>G.106.</u> p. 180

Chapter Five

The Wider Scope of Natural Theology

1. Philosophy of Religion	page 130
2. The Nature of God	132
3. Some Miscellaneous Studies	133
Reference Notes	135

1. Philosophy of Religion

The term "Philosophy of Religion" may be used to describe a philosophical approach to the problems of theology. It is an encyclopedic term and would include many of the studies we have already discussed. It could be used to embrace all that Lord Gifford meant by "Natural Theology in the widest sense of the term". There are a number of Gifford studies that range over a wide field of philosophical problems involved in religion. They are not easily classifiable in any of our other sections, but may be broadly described as Philosophy of Religion.

Campbell Fraser made a comprehensive survey of problems involved in theistic belief when he lectured at Edinburgh in the early years of the Giffords. The lectures were subsequently published as The Philosophy of Theism. Beginning with the general problem of the ultimate meaning and purpose of human life, he reviewed materialistic and pantheistic answers and what he calls panegoism. He is a theist finally not because of the cosmological or moral arguments but because he finds goodness at the very heart of things. Yet for a satisfactory theistic faith this must be an omnipotent goodness and he spent some five lectures on the problem of evil, divine intervention and human progress. Fraser considers the alternative to an optimistic theistic view and finds it unbearable. He concludes:

" It is the inevitable sceptical and pessimist alternative in this dilemma that makes theistic optimism, with its rational consequences, the highest human philosophy; so

that we are obliged in reason to rest in final faith and hope, unless its incoherence can be demonstrated, dissolving experience and its divine postulate, along with science and goodness in common ruin. The extinction of theistic faith is the extinction of reason in man."¹

This is, of course, an expression of faith rather than a reasoned conclusion, but the phrase "unless its incoherence can be demonstrated" may give us a clue to one of philosophy's tasks in respect to religion. Though reason may not construct a faith it may point out inconsistencies.

Much more recently H.J. Paton described this task in the opening sentence of The Modern Predicament.

"One function of philosophy is to think dispassionately about religion."²

He recognised that the traditional task of natural theology is no longer a practical proposition. Yet the fact that the truths of religion cannot be proved does not mean that we have to make unconditional surrender in the face of the "artillery of the Logical Positivists on the Left" and "the big guns of the Theological Positivists on the Right".³ Paton claims for natural theology the right to reason why in spite of the volleying and thundering of the cannons to the right and the left. The ways of religious experience, mysticism or Christian existentialism offer what may seem at first sight to be attractive escape routes, but even these must be subject to the dispassionate examination of reason. So Paton set out to

examine the problems confronting theistic belief in the mid-twentieth century, problems posed by positivist philosophy and theology, conflicts of science and religion and the perennial moral problem of the presence of evil in the world. Paton recognised that in the end it might be necessary to take a leap of faith or a leap of doubt, but the task of reason is to clear the ground. He concludes :

" For the religious man the decision may come only by the grace of God, but even so it should not be taken blindly in the dark. The leap of faith - or the leap of doubt - should be made in the light of all that each man can know, not merely of science, but of action and of art and of religion itself." ⁴

Thus natural theology cannot give a man a religion, but it may prevent him from accepting a foolish one and will help him to understand the nature of the faith he does accept. As William Wallace had said, over half a century earlier, the task of philosophy is to construe religion rather than construct it.

" To construe a thing," he further explains, " is to set it in its relation to other things, to give it its place in a system, to deprive it of its mere individuality, and to understand its place and value." ⁵

2. The Nature of God

Such an exercise in construing religion was carried out by L.R.Farnell in The Attributes of God. Here no particular attempt is made to prove the existence of God. Farnell takes as his starting point the phrase from the will "the Knowledge of His

Nature and Attributes" and discusses the attributes applied to God in various world religions and the possibility of reconciling such apparently contradictory attributes as benevolence and omnipotence. The study is mainly historical but Farnell recognises that religious faith must be construed and analysed.

" A religion that makes intellectual assumptions incurs intellectual obligations; and cannot admit the claim, occasionally made in our pulpits, that incoherence, and self-contradiction are proofs of the highest truth. Intellectual progress in a religion means progress towards harmony and coherence in its assumptions."⁶

The natural theologian thus appears to be the constant critic of the dogmatic theologian. He construes theological statements; - in Wallace's sense of the word - he tries to discover how they fit in with the whole body of knowledge available from other sources. He cannot be satisfied with theological formulary made once for all, but he must constantly question it in the light of advances in thought in all the other fields of human endeavour.

3. Some Miscellaneous Studies

W. MacNeile Dixon, who held the Chair of English Literature at Glasgow, was invited by that University to take the place of Emile Meyerson, who had died before he could fulfil the obligations of the Gifford lectureship. Many different phrases from Lord Gifford's will have provided jumping off points. MacNeile Dixon is alone in fixing on the requirement that the lectures should be "popular", and it must be confessed that his

lectures are more readable than many. For subject matter he ranges over the whole field of Philosophy of Religion, illustrating his points with frequent and apt quotation from the poets, and all with a humility that forbids any dogmatic conclusion, finding consolation in poetry rather than metaphysic. He reiterates Shelley's question :

" What were our consolations on this side of the grave, and what were our aspirations beyond it - if poetry did not ascend to bring light and fire from those eternal regions where the owl-winged faculty of calculation dare not ever soar?"⁷

The poet sees things in the universe that are missed by the philosopher and the scientist, and the writer puts his trust in what he calls "the larger vision of the poets". To MacNeile Dixon beauty is more satisfying than truth.

" And if I could spend the course of everlasting time in a paradise of varied loveliness, I do not fancy my felicity would be greatly impaired if the last secret of the universe were withheld from me."⁸

Likewise the problems of morality have little attraction for him, and he proposed at the outset to review "the human situation" as clearly as possible, offering such light as the poets shed upon it but bearing in mind that

" our business is not to solve problems beyond our mortal powers, but to see to it that our thoughts are not unworthy of the great theme."⁹

MacNeile Dixon thus raises the questions of the ordinary man in

the ordinary situation. If Paul Tillich is right this is all that natural theology can do but where Tillich believes there are revelatory answers to the questions, McNeile Dixon offers the palliative of poetry.

Pringle-Pattison's book on The Idea of Immortality has been mentioned in another section. Pringle-Pattison recognises that arguments for immortality do not amount to proof, but he attempts to examine the question with ruthless honesty and avoiding wishful thinking, so that while faith is the final arbiter, the leap of faith will be made in the light of reasoned argument. In this spirit Pringle-Pattison examines the problems involved in the concept of immortality and contrasts impersonal participation in the Absolute and eternal life in a communion of saints.

The writers of the studies included in this chapter are agreed that final proof of religious truths are impossible. They are also agreed that our thoughts on these great subjects should be as worthy as possible. Perhaps we shall find in the end that the natural theologian is one who thinks about religion rather than one who claims to know or to prove.

<u>Part 1.</u>	<u>Chapter 5.</u>	<u>Reference Notes</u>
1	<u>G.38.</u> (2nd edn) p.331	6 <u>G.35.</u> p.280
2	<u>G.79.</u> p. 19	7 <u>G.29.</u> p.437
3	<u>G.79.</u> p. 47	8 <u>G.29.</u> p. 14
4	<u>G.79.</u> p. 388	9 <u>G.29.</u> p. 22
5	<u>G.100.</u> p. 18	

Chapter Six

From Goodness to God

1	God and Goodness	page 137
2	Self-authenticating Moral Philosophy	138
3	Comparative and Christian Ethics	140
4	From Morality to Religion	142
5	The Crisis of the Personal	147
6	Tentative Conclusions	150
	Reference Notes	151

1. God and Goodness

" Is holiness loved by the gods because it is holy, or is it holy because it is loved by the gods? " was the question posed by Socrates to Euthyphro. We may rephrase the question : is goodness a self-authenticating quality loved by God because of its nature, or is it a quality derivative from his nature ? Moral philosophies can be divided into two classes, those seeking to establish morality on the basis of theism and those who treat morality as self-authenticating. Thus Kant saw God, freedom and immortality as postulates which must be accepted if moral experience is to be understood, while John Stuart Mill offered in his Utilitarianism a moral philosophy which needs neither deity nor immortality. Both approaches are open to Gifford lecturers, who may concern themselves with

" the Knowledge of the Relations which men and the whole universe bear to Him (God), the Knowledge of the Nature and Foundation of Ethics or Morals, and of all Obligations and Duties thence arising."

So among the Gifford lecturers we find those for whom the ideas of morality and deity are inseparable and those whose exposition of morality is free from theistic assumptions. It is with the latter that we concern ourselves first, but it must not be assumed that all those thinkers who do not introduce God into the argument have therefore concluded that there is no deity.

2. Self-authenticating Moral Philosophy

The Aberdeen lectures of 1935-36 provided Sir David Ross with the opportunity of restating his intuitionist ethics first propounded in The Right and the Good (1930). Rightness and goodness, according to Ross, are simple, unanalysable properties to be apprehended by intellectual insight. They cannot be explained in terms of any other qualities. There is nothing here inconsistent with theism but Ross keeps the discussion within the realm of obligation without seeking a divine source. In the closing paragraphs of his lectures he raises the question of natural theology but only to indicate that a clear examination of the whole field of moral judgments is a necessary preliminary to any natural theology which is to ascribe moral attributes to God. Foundations of Ethics is such a preliminary examination.

A similar opportunity for the clarification and development of an earlier work was afforded to Ralph Barton Perry at Glasgow in 1947-48. Twenty eight years separated the publication of his General Theory of Value and the final appearance of his Gifford lectures, Realms of Value. According to Perry a thing has value when it is the object of any interest, and anything that is of interest is ipso facto valuable.¹ One value is higher than another because the interest concerned is stronger. There is, however, no justification for the assertion of the objective existence of values although they have existence in the logical sense. Religion is "man's dearest solicitude, his concern for

the fate of that which he accounts most valuable".² God is the highest value and supreme "object of interest" to the worshipping man, but this is no guarantee of the existence of God. Perry briefly reviews the classical proofs and finds them wanting. Morality does not lead us to religion but religion embraces and transcends morality.³

" Religion, then, though it be more than morality, cannot be less. It must contain morality, however much it may add thereto."⁴

In other words, unbelief in God does not deny morality, but any belief in God must include it. Perry puts his faith in "meliorism" and expounds a religion which has the proud purpose of "replacing evil with good and good with better, so as to achieve the best possible".⁵ This is not what Lord Gifford understood by religion, admirable though the aims might be for UNESCO.

Brand Blanshard's Reason and Goodness, based on lectures at St. Andrews in 1952-53, has little bearing on the theistic discussion. His rationalistic concern for coherence is applied to the field of ethical study. Feeling and thinking have played their part in man's moral development, but the final authority must be reason. It is possible to give a coherent account of morality without resort to theism. Similarly von Wright's The Varieties of Goodness, based on lectures also at St. Andrews in 1959-60, enquires into the conceptual foundations of morals

and legislation but makes no theological reference.

Behind the problem of morality lies the question of freedom, and, while many lecturers have touched on the problem, only Austin Farrer has taken it as his main theme. He describes his Freedom of the Will, the Edinburgh lectures of 1957, as "a hand to hand fight with deterministic misconception".⁶ He deals with the problems of body-mind relationship, thought, speech and conduct. Only in the last chapter does he touch on theological issues and then merely to indicate them. His work is a valuable prolegomenon to any moral theory and we are led to the conclusion that any theism demands freedom, but freedom does not necessarily imply theism. "If we believe our theology," Farrer comments, "it is probably because we accept a divine voice as having actually spoken; and that is not a claim which a Gifford Lecturer has any business to investigate."⁷ None of these lecturers have claimed to be doing natural theology, but, of course, their approach is quite legitimately within the Gifford terms.

3. Comparative and Christian Ethics

Bishop Gore set out to investigate the idea of the good life "with its postulates" as mankind in general has understood it. He leaves the psychological problems of freedom and obligation and simply examines the ideals of the good life as presented in Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and other eastern religions, continuing with an examination of Platonism, Judaism and the

teaching of Jesus. He finds in the Christian ethic

" not only . . . the consummation of Israel's religion, but . . . the best and fullest representative of all the distinctive types of ethical monotheism which have appeared in history."⁸

The fact that man has emerged from the animal world and the ideals of truth, beauty and goodness have been established is taken as evidence of the ultimate purpose of the universe. The fact that Christianity is the highest of the religions upholding these values, Gore argues, conveys a deeper certainty to its postulate of God as Three in One. In the latter part of the book Bishop Gore develops his argument for the existence of God. Under Lord Gifford's terms, he is content "to give . . . reasons for holding that the Christian view of the world is the most rational view which we men can entertain".⁹ The Bishop's argument is fundamentally a reshaping of the Kantian thesis, or, as he claims, it is a summing up of the moral experience of mankind.

" There is something certain - that is, the distinction of good and evil and the absolute obligation of doing the right. This . . . is something which does not admit of further analysis. It is an ultimate datum . . . It is the basis of humanism and of the sense of the worth and dignity of human life all the world over."¹⁰

Kant thinks that this data demands the "postulate" of God. Gore prefers to say that it demands a rational faith in Deity.

Bishop Hensley Henson's lectures offer a straightforward examination of the Christian ethic. The Bishop summons to his

aid two earlier apologists, Tertullian and Bishop Butler. Tertullian had claimed that the human spirit is naturally Christian and Butler described Christianity as " a republication of natural religion ".¹¹ Hensley Henson claims that Christianity is a natural development from earlier, more primitive religions. Religion is all natural and all revealed.¹² This gives the clue to the understanding of the full title of the lectures, ChristianiMorality, Natural, Developing, Final. Christian morality is natural in that it is derivative from "natural" Christianity. It is developing in that there have been within it sub-Christian elements which have been outgrown. Yet it is final in that it is the main stock from which any future morality will stem. Hensley Henson believes, however, that there is no future for a Christian humanist morality divorced from religion. Theistic assumptions are made throughout the book, and no attempt is made to present a reasoned theistic argument.

4. From Morality to Religion

W.R.Sorley was the first lecturer to present a sustained exposition of the moral argument for the existence of God which he did in his Aberdeen lectures of 1914-15, subsequently published as Moral Values and the Idea of God. He argues initially for the objectivity of values. Thus :

" When we predicate value of anything, we pass from the mere concept or essence of the thing, with its qualities, to the bearing which this essence has upon existence; it is worth existing or it ought to be."¹³

To say that a thing has value assumes its existence; otherwise we are simply saying that it would be valuable if it did exist. If we say that value judgments are merely subjective we are striking at the possibility of any kind of primary judgments, for when we say "A is good" we at least think we are saying more than "A is pleasing to me"¹⁴, just as when we say something is yellow we usually mean more than "I think it is yellow". Arguing from the objectivity of moral values, Sorley goes on to show that the world process is such that values can be realised in it. Where Kant and others had argued that another life is necessary in order that the goods and evils of this life may be fairly recompensed, Sorley argues that only in such a world as this, of unequal fortune, can moral values be realised. It is for this end that the world seems adapted, and for other ends such as the production of happiness it is peculiarly ill-fitted.

" The character of the free agent is made by facing and fighting with obstacles; it is not formed along the line of easy successful reaction to stimulus. Facile adaptation to familiar environment is no test of character nor training in character."¹⁵

This is a variant, of course, on Bosanquet's description, borrowed from Keats, of the universe as a vale of soul-making. Where Bosanquet's souls are ultimately lost in the Absolute, the selves, for Sorley, find their destiny in fellowship with a personal God.¹⁶ Deism in its various forms^{is}/discussed and dismissed; likewise various forms of pluralism. Sorley finally concludes :

" God must therefore be conceived as the final home of values, the Supreme Worth - as possessing the fulness of knowledge and beauty and goodness and whatever else is of value for its own sake."¹⁷

What is fundamentally the same conclusion was reached by A.E.Taylor a decade later at St. Andrews. The first volume of The Faith of a Moralist is concerned with the theological implications of morality. The relationship between Is and Ought again provides the starting point for the discussion.

" The possibility of genuine worship and religion is absolutely bound up with a final coincidence of existence and value in an object which is at once the most real of beings and the good "so good that nothing better can be conceived", at once the Alpha, the primary and absolute source of being, and the Omega, the ultimate goal of desire and endeavour."¹⁸

Taylor is careful to distinguish between "desires" and "satisfactions"¹⁹; the pilgrim self moves from one satisfaction to a higher satisfaction. This moral quest would be self-defeating unless there were

" an object to sustain it which embodies in itself good complete and whole, so that in having it we are possessing that which absolutely satisfies the heart's desire and can never be taken from us."²⁰

Moral experience thus implies both the existence of God and an eternal destiny for the individual whose aim is the fruition of the good. He further adduces the experiences of guilt and loyalty as evidence of the existence of God. The guilt felt by

a man is something more than the realisation that a social code has been broken or that institutions have been disrespected. Similarly the endurances demanded by loyalty are only comprehensible if the loyalty is to an ultimate personal authority.

" Belief in the absolute reality of God, and love for God in whom we believe, are at the heart of living morality. The good of our fellow-men is unworthily thought of when we do not conceive that good as a life of knowledge of God and transformation by the knowledge into the likeness of God. And the love which arises from our belief is the one motive adequate to secure the full and wholehearted discharge of the duties laid upon us by the ideal."²¹

Taylor goes on from this point to demonstrate the necessity of "the initiative of the eternal". Man cannot reach the goal set by morality through his own efforts. He needs the grace of God by which alone he can be saved. Taylor concludes that the Christian revelation of God interpreted against the background of idealist philosophy gives the most satisfactory explanation of our moral experience. Kant's postulates were God, freedom and immortality, but Taylor finds in God, grace and eternal life the three great supernatural implications of the moral life.

Since Taylor's time moral statements have been dismissed by some thinkers as mere exclamations of like or dislike. Another decade was to pass, during which the traditional structures of morality and reason were being threatened by the "enemies of Reason"²², before De Burgh traced the path from morality to

religion once more. From Morality to Religion is based on the St. Andrews lectures of 1937-38. Sir David Ross, who had just completed his Aberdeen lectures, had drawn the distinction between conduct as motivated by the thought of obligation and conduct motivated by the desire for a rational good. In distinguishing between morality and religion De Burgh points out that morality is based on praxis for praxis's sake, that is on obligation. Religion is also a praxis but based on a theoria such as belief in the love or goodness of God. Religion differs from morality in that :

- (1) religion implies worship,
- (2) the essence of religion is theoria while the essence of morality is praxis.
- (3) the activity of religion is motivated by theoria which can be simply described as knowledge of God.²³

Further, and here we have a restatement of Taylor's argument, man cannot by his own efforts fulfil the demands of the moral ideal; he needs the grace of God - the virtus infusa of St. Thomas. All this, the sense of obligation, the lofty ideal set by the moral consciousness, man's desperate sense of inadequacy, leads De Burgh to a theistic conclusion.

" The consciousness of obligation is explicable only on the assumption of a moral order in the universe, and ... this assumption is most intelligible if we accept the witness of religion to the being and goodness of God. That is the direct form of the moral argument."²⁴

De Burgh recognised that theism cannot be proved but claimed that the theistic hypothesis offers a reasonable solution to the problems involved in ethical theory and, taken with evidence from other fields of experience, offers a probability that is "almost irresistible". Commenting on Sorley, Taylor and De Burgh, John MacQuarrie writes,

" It must be acknowledged that the three philosophers considered . . . whether taken singly or together, present an impressive case for completing morality in theistic religion."²⁵

5. The Crisis of the Personal

The nature and destiny of man have provided subject matter for numerous lectures, some, like Niebuhr, making a theological approach and others, like Bosanquet, seeking an answer through metaphysical enquiry. The opening chapter of John MacMurray's Glasgow lectures bears the title, The Crisis of the Personal. The apotheosis of the state and the decline of religion have led to an unwillingness on the part of man to assume personal responsibility and to the dissolution of the older metaphysical structures. One solution has been offered by existentialism, which recognises where the weakness lies, but MacMurray judges it to be a one-sided solution.²⁶ He sets out to discover the intellectual form of the personal. In the first course, The Self as Agent, he deals with the problem of the self not as a thinker but as an agent, and in the second course, Persons in Relation, with the problem of "you and me", for the self can only be

understood in action and reaction with other selves. MacMurray recognises with De Burgh that practical action demands a theoria, but declares that action provides the key to meaning. He finally describes the world as one action, and since the essence of action lies in its intentional character, the argument leads on to God. In MacMurray's words :

" The argument which starts from the primacy of the practical moves steadily in the direction of a belief in God. To think of the world in practical terms is ultimately to think of the unity of the world as one action, and therefore as informed by a unifying intention."²⁷

The argument is taken further in the second volume with an analysis of the personal nature of human life. The scientific picture of the universe must always be incomplete, for the scientist specifically sets out to be impersonal. There can never be a proof of God's existence satisfactory to the scientist. Personal conviction is a different matter. So MacMurray reaches the concept of a personal God :

" A personal conception alone is fully theistic and fully religious. For there can be no action without an agent, and an agent, whether finite or infinite, though he is immanent in existence, necessarily transcends it . . . God, therefore, as the infinite Agent is immanent in the world which is his act, but transcendent of it."²⁸

In On Selfhood and Godhood C.A.Campbell takes up the problems raised by MacMurray, and asks,

" What kind of a being is man ? Is he a "self" in any sense of that term which implies that he has, or may have,

what is meant in religion by a "soul" ? Is he, in fact, the kind of being he has got to be if religious language about him is to have any meaning ? "29

While the argument from moral experience is only part of Campbell's case, it is a fundamental part. He begins with an examination of the nature of selfhood. Moral experience is meaningless unless there is a continuing "self" that acts. Hume's "bundle of sensations" theory is not sufficient to account for our awareness of self-consciousness. The self is intrinsically connected with the mind rather than the body and is essentially a reasoning being. Reason then must be the arbiter either in discovering the meaning of life or testing revelations which purport to give meaning. Psychology can help us in distinguishing between spurious and "authentic" revelations, but even the "authentic" must be subject to logical examination. Revelations, like any other forms of proposition, must at least be self-consistent. Moral and rational experience only makes sense if man is free, free to choose good or evil, free to find truth or error. In the second course Campbell addressed himself to the question, "Is religion true?" and set out the arguments for a supra-rational theism, finding support from Otto's Das Heilige. He links the moral argument and the metaphysical to identify the ultimate reality of philosophy and the God of religion. He finds irreconcilable inconsistencies in a purely rational theism and attempts to show that a symbolic supra-rational theology is at least arguable and self-consistent.

On Campbell's neo-idealist view no further proof than this is possible.

6. Tentative Conclusions

The studies reviewed in this chapter make it abundantly clear that any account of ultimate reality must include moral experience in its purview. However we explain it, the moral sense is a unique product of evolution. Moral experience is as much part of the data as religious experience. As we have seen, it is possible to account for moral experience without any theistic hypothesis; morality is useful for the survival of mankind. Others, however, represented by Sorley, A.E. Taylor and De Burgh, find that a theistic faith makes the best sense of moral experience. Kant's conclusions are confirmed to some extent in that the moral arguments have seemed more impressive than the cosmological and teleological arguments discussed in an earlier chapter. Absolute proof is as impossible here as elsewhere, but once we have accepted belief on other grounds moral experience goes a long way to confirming that belief. While the purely ethical studies cannot be termed natural theology, it seems justifiable to use the term to describe the investigation of the implications of moral experience for theology.

<u>Part 1.</u>	<u>Chapter 6.</u>	<u>Reference Notes</u>
1. <u>G.76.</u>	pp. 2-3.	26 <u>G.61.</u> p. 29
2 <u>G.76.</u>	p. 463	27 <u>G.61.</u> p. 221
3 <u>G.76.</u>	p. 165	28 <u>G.62.</u> p. 223
4 <u>G.76.</u>	p. 471	29 <u>G.23.</u> p. 8
5 <u>G.76.</u>	p. 492	
6 <u>G.36.</u>	p. 297	
7 <u>G.36.</u>	p. 312	
8 <u>G.42.</u>	p. 201	
9 <u>G.42.</u>	p. 316	
10 <u>G.42.</u>	p. 321	
11 <u>G.47.</u>	pp. 2-3	
12 <u>G.47.</u>	p. 21	
13 <u>G.89.</u>	p. 77	
14 <u>G.89.</u>	p. 136	
15 <u>G.89.</u>	p. 346	
16 <u>G.89.</u>	pp.347-8	
17 <u>G.89.</u>	p. 474	
18 <u>G.94.</u>	Vol.1. pp. 31-2	
19 <u>G.94.</u>	Vol.1. p.104footnote	
20 <u>G.94.</u>	Vol.1. p.105	
21 <u>G.94.</u>	Vol.1. pp.209-10	
22 <u>G.27.</u>	p. 2	
23 <u>G.27.</u>	pp.28-33	
24 <u>G.27.</u>	pp. 212-3	
25	Twentieth Century Religious Thought, 1963, p.71	

Chapter Seven

Defenders of Faith

1. True and Felt Knowledge	page 153
2. Faith and Philosophy	155
3. Faith and Credulity	156
4. The Necessity of Faith	158
5. The Nature of Faith	162
6. Natural and Revealed Religion	165
7. John Caird and A.M.Fairbairn	167
8. Otto Pflleiderer and H.M.Gwatkin	168
9. William Temple	171
10. Karl Barth	173
11. Niebuhr and Brunner	174
12. Tillich and Bultmann	177
13. Tentative Conclusions	180
Reference Notes	182

1. True and Felt Knowledge

It is interesting to note that the word "faith" does not appear in Lord Gifford's deposition and the word "belief" is only mentioned once incidentally. He will be satisfied with nothing less than "the knowledge of God, the knowledge of His Nature and Attributes, and the knowledge of the nature and foundation of Ethics". He does on one occasion qualify the word adjectively and in parenthesis when he speaks of "the true and felt knowledge (not merely nominal knowledge)". Evidently for Lord Gifford faith is knowledge plus feeling as opposed to nominal knowledge which is accompanied by no emotional involvement. The man who knows Dr. Smith by sight, where he lives and what surgery hours he keeps presumably has nominal knowledge. The man who has "felt knowledge" of Dr. Smith knows the same facts but in addition trusts him and accepts him as his physician. He not only knows facts about the doctor but knows the doctor himself. This would be a helpful analogy if only there were facts to know about God. While Lord Gifford saw quite clearly that religion was something "felt" he still thought that reasoning about God would lead to knowledge and something imposed upon this knowledge would lead to felt knowledge, much like going to Dr. Smith's surgery and consulting him would lead to a felt knowledge of Dr. Smith.

Tennyson had offered a straightforward distinction which expresses good Kantian philosophy in the lines,

" We have but faith, we cannot know;
For knowledge is of things we see."¹

Many of the Gifford lecturers have recognised this distinction. Faith, of course, must assume the existence of God, but the assumption of the existence of God is not faith. Even if it were possible to demonstrate conclusively that God exists, this would not provide what the religious person understands by faith. At best such demonstration would put a person in a position where he could have faith, or if, having arrived at knowledge of God, he was constrained to worship, he would then have felt knowledge. Henry Jones wrote in the introduction to A Faith that Enquires :

" If I read our times aright, there are many thousands of thoughtful men in this country whose interest in religion is sincere, but who can neither accept the ordinary teaching of the Church, nor subject themselves to its dogmatic ways. I would fain demonstrate to these men, both by example and by precept, that the enquiry which makes fullest use of the severe intellectual methods, supports those beliefs upon which a religion that is worth having rests. Let man seek God by way of pure reason, and he will find him."²

In the last sentence Henry Jones suggests that a man may go all the way by reason, but in the penultimate sentence he takes the view more widely accepted among Gifford lecturers that reason may give support to a position already accepted by faith. A number of the lecturers, as we shall see, have claimed that faith provides a knowledge of its own which may indeed be tested by reason but cannot be verified. Reason can thus perform the negative

function of showing a particular faith to be unfounded, but it cannot confirm a faith as true except in the sense that it may demonstrate that it is non-contradictory and therefore possibly true.

2. Faith and Philosophy

William Temple put his finger on one clear distinction between faith and philosophy when he said,

" The primary assurances of Religion are the ultimate questions of philosophy."³

The religious man who is sure of his faith needs no support from theistic arguments. If they are of value to him it is because they either clarify his own faith or help him to demonstrate to unbelievers its reasonableness. Religion may come to some few men at the end of a philosophical pilgrimage but for most men individually and in the history of the race a living religion precedes any philosophising or theologising about it. As John Caird wrote,

" Religion exists and must exist as a life and experience before it can be made the object of reflective thought."⁴

William James likewise described theological formulas as secondary products.⁵

Life demands action and this is one reason for giving priority to faith. Decision cannot afford to await the findings of philosophy; action is of the essence of faith. Some thinkers may claim that philosophy leads to action, but as soon as it becomes a way of life we more naturally term it religion.

A purely theoretical or hypothetical account of the universe does not compel loyalty or obedience. On the other hand "faith" unaccompanied by action is nothing more than a theoretical proposition or series of propositions about God and the universe. The New Testament says clearly that faith without works is dead and John Watson expresses it with equal clarity.

" Faith is the expression of my deepest and truest self; it is the spirit which determines the whole character of my self-conscious life. To suppose that genuine faith should exist without being translated into action is therefore a contradiction in terms. The faith which has no influence on the life is not faith."⁶

The knowledge that Lord Gifford sought was a felt knowledge, and most of the lecturers who have touched on this aspect of his will have understood it to mean faith.

3. Faith and Credulity

No doubt the individuals, who shared in the primitive religions investigated by Max Muller and others, had religious experience that was translated into action in daily life. They had intuitions which might well be described as "felt knowledge". Such knowledge can no longer be so described once it has been shown to be false. When the searchlight of reason is thrown on such a faith it is seen to be incredible in its present form and is either dismissed or reinterpreted to give a more rational and therefore more satisfying world picture. Reason is religion's safeguard against credulity. If faith is nothing more than a

capacity for believing the incredible, then ~~the~~ Duchess in Alice in Wonderland, who believed half a dozen incredible facts every morning before breakfast, was extremely religious. So reason serves religion in submitting claimed truths to impartial examination. It was this service that Lord Gifford wished to render religion and he specifically excluded appeals to so-called miraculous revelation that might by-pass the sentinel of reason. The lecturers who have expounded the Christian faith (with the one exception) have attempted to submit their faith to rational analysis. They themselves may accept "miraculous revelation" but they have not appealed to this revelation to sustain their argument. Rather, like Leonard Hodgson, they have tried to show that the Christian interpretation of the data makes the best sense. Only Barth, the avowed opponent of all natural theology, appeals directly to the revealed Word. Even he must believe that in the matter of knowledge of the eternal Godhead it is reasonable that our only means of knowledge should be revelation. Otherwise he has left no satisfactory distinction between faith and credulity.

Unless we bring faith to the bar of reason there is no means of knowing if the faith is worth holding. How are we to distinguish between the "truths" accepted by the orthodox Christian and the "truths" accepted by the Jehovah's witness? How can the validity of faith-knowledge be tested? These are some of the problems involved when a man sets out to discover

"true and felt" knowledge of God. It must be "felt" or it will not differ from metaphysical speculation. It must be "true" or it will not differ from illusion.

4. The Necessity of Faith

The revival of positivism in the thirties forced theologians to look again at the nature of faith. At St. Andrews in 1939-40 Richard Kroner lectured on The Primacy of Faith. This volume, published in New York in 1943, is not very well known in Britain. The influence of Barthian theology is marked but Kroner has his own contribution to make in his discussion of the religious imagination. Natural theology had suffered at the hands of Luther and Kant.

" As Luther stressed the primacy of faith against any objective guarantee on the part of man, so Kant defended the primacy of faith against any objective knowledge of God?⁷

He goes on to point out the contribution made by religious imagination to faith which solves problems impervious to reason.

" God is a God of faith, not of thought; He appears in the kingdom of the imagination, not in the system of categories; He appears on Mount Sinai; in the burning bush, in the still small voice, not in the absolute idea. The knowledge of God is a knowledge immanent in faith; it cannot be isolated and made logical and conceptual."⁸

Kroner does not go all the way with Barth on the subject of natural theology, but rather echoes Tillich in declaring that natural theology can only ask the questions or pose the problems; it cannot reach the answers. Man cannot understand God because

God is not an object but rather the all-embracing subject. As far as man's intellectual approach is concerned God remains a problematic idea. Kroner continues,

" Natural theology is the science of this problematic idea. Though the idea is problematic, it is nonetheless of the greatest importance, since it closes the system of thought not by giving final answers but by showing the necessity of revelation. Faith supplements what is lacking in the field of reason."⁹

We are told finally that faith is an existential assertion.

" Faith is "Existential" as knowledge never can be without denying its own nature and intention."¹⁰

There is no hope of verifying religious truth by means of reason. Although God cannot be an object there can be an apprehension of God by the self, but only through faith. Faith claims primacy in the ontological field, and man can only know God, who is pure being, by faith and not through the understanding or the will.¹¹ When we ask how a man is to decide which particular faith he should accept we are told that

" the particular excellence of the Christian religion derives from the content of its images, or, in other words, from the truth of its images."¹²

Thus faith is self-authenticating; it is true because it strikes us as being true. It is not that the Christian faith makes the best sense; if it does it is quite incidental to its truth. Although self-authenticating this faith is not self-generating for its source is God. Kroner's position is not far removed

from that of Barth as the following passage shows :

" Faith is the innermost essence of life, for man is man because he touches the universal divine mystery. Faith is devotion to this mystery as conveyed by divine imagination in accordance with out moral experience and with our ontological, epistemological, and ethical self-reflection. But though consistent with it, faith overleaps the boundary line of philosophic thought; therefore its truth transcends, and cannot be proved by, any rational means. . . The majesty of God neither requires nor permits logical pressure to convince the human heart. God enters the heart whenever it pleases Him to do so. But, though no human intellect will ever suffice to prove the existence of God and to substitute knowledge for faith, so no human mind will ever avail to refute His existence or to fabricate a religion out of the materials of philosophic reflections. Faith holds final sway in the kingdom of the spirit." ¹³

Kroner's position has been expounded at some length because in its main contention - the primacy of faith - it is the position accepted by most of the theologians who have held Gifford appointments in the last decade or more. Where they have differed has been in the role assigned to reason in respect to faith.

Kroner's stress on what he describes as "divine imagination" links up with the approach through symbolic thought. In the earlier part of Symbolism and Belief Edwyn Bevan had examined the relationship of symbolism to the expression of religious

truth, and in the closing chapter he turned to the question of what finally justifies the assertion of faith. We are told once again that a "leap" of some kind is necessary. He concludes

" that neither the hypothesis that the Power behind the Universe is a spiritual Power which cares for values nor the hypothesis that the universe is indifferent to values can be demonstrated, that both the believer and the atheist or agnostic act upon an unproved hypothesis, make a leap beyond experience."¹⁴

This does not mean that a man has no ground for his choice and that he is at liberty to accept one hypothesis rather than another simply because he prefers it. There are other elements than the purely rational that lead a man to belief but rational criticism may indeed lead him to disbelief. Thus :

" A man believes in God before he can say why he believes in God, but he will not go on believing in God, if, being a rational man, he has brought the belief into connexion with other knowledge about the Universe and convinced himself that it is incompatible with some bit of Reality of which he is certain. If, however, after bringing his belief in God into connexion with other knowledge about the Universe, he finds the hold of the belief upon him unrelaxed, he will be able to point to grounds which seem to justify his belief. He will be able 'to give reason for the faith that is in him'."¹⁵

It is clear that Bevan allows reason a rather more important role than Kroner does, but finally he is one with Kroner in stressing the primacy of faith, for he concludes that

" what actually causes anyone to believe in God is direct perception of the divine."¹⁶

5. The Nature of Faith

We are taken further towards the acceptance of faith as existential commitment by Gabriel Marcel, particularly in the second volume of The Mystery of Being, sub-titled Faith and Reality. Faith, for Marcel, is never the culmination of an argument. The proofs of God are ineffectual when they are most needed, and when a man already believes they are unnecessary.¹⁷ Faith is to be distinguished from opinion and conviction. Opinion, according to Marcel, expresses nothing more than "I maintain that . . .".¹⁸ Conviction is nothing more than the taking up of a definite and unshakeable position.¹⁹ Faith, which comes by conversion rather than argument, is a 'believing in' rather than a 'believing that'. Marcel uses the analogy of opening a credit. He writes,

" If I believe in something, it means that I pledge myself fundamentally, and this pledge affects not only what I have but also what I am. In a modern philosophical vocabulary, this could be expressed by saying that to belief is attached an existential index, which, in principle, is completely lacking to conviction."²⁰

Marcel specifically describes faith as a bet²¹ and in the language of Buber describes the object of faith as a 'toi'. When I believe I commit myself existentially. Hence the mystery of being is to be understood through the experience of 'we are' rather than 'I think'. Faith can, of course, fall back to be no more than a conviction and in gradual deterioration to an opinion. Finally, Marcel reminds us, the God of faith is the God of Abraham, Isaac

and Jacob and not the God described by Pascal as the God of the philosophers.²²

The question of the relationship of such faith to knowledge remains. It is sometimes claimed that knowledge of God is an inference from religious experience, but John Baillie strenuously denies this. Faith itself involves knowledge and is an intrinsic part of religious experience.

" The reason why we must not say that faith is based on religious experience is that religious experience, if it is authentic, already contains faith. Faith is the cognitive element in it, on which the accompanying emotional and volitional elements are utterly dependent."²³

Thus faith yields knowledge not by the process of inference but as a gift of God. Baillie describes faith as "a mode of primary apprehension"²⁴ Later he writes,

" Faith is apprehension through commitment. This alone is true faith, fides salvifica as distinguished from mere intellectual acceptance. . . Faith is thus at one and the same time a mode of apprehension and a mode of active response to that apprehension. This is a region of experience in which there can be no apprehension without commitment, but it is equally true to say that there can be no commitment without apprehension."²⁵

If we ask John Baillie how we can verify the truths thus apprehended he answers with Kroner, Bevan and Marcel that there can be no verification, even though a man may be more certain of God than of the verifiable truths of science.

" It seems impossible to enunciate any theoretical propositions concerning God and the unseen world about

which we could be certain that they were true just as we enunciated them, nevertheless all our experience, in this realm as in others, 'transfused with certitude' or, in Tillich's phrase, that certitude 'pulsates through all our thinking'. Our direct knowledge . . . is not knowledge of truths but knowledge of realities, and it is out of our immediate contact with these realities that certitude is born."²⁶

Faith is thus an act of perceiving rather than conceiving.²⁷

There is, however, no reason to suppose that in the spiritual realm the religious man will be exempt from the possibility of mistaking illusion for perception. There are those who are transfused with certitude concerning beliefs that seem utter nonsense to other people. It is not clear how we are to distinguish between true faith and illusion if faith is self-authenticating. Leonard Hodgson in For Faith and Freedom stresses the part to be played by reason. He criticises, on the one hand, the extreme liberal view which denies that God performs any particular actions in this world of space and time, and, on the other hand, the Barthian contention that God only speaks through special revelation. Nor is he satisfied with the two source theory which separates truths of knowledge and truths of revelation. Revelation and reason are complementary.

" It would be no use for God to give revelations to creatures incapable of receiving them, and the only way in which truth can be received is by a mind that can distinguish between truth and falsehood, in other words, by the exercise of reason. Revelation and reason are not

alternatives appropriate to different fields of inquiry. They are correlative, the divine and the human sides involved in all man's growth in knowledge."²⁸

Further Hodgson tells us that faith is akin to intuition; it is likened to a flair for mathematics or diagnosis; it is seeing things more clearly, but reason is always involved.

" This opening of the eyes of the mind to see with the eye of faith is not the substitution of faith for reason, or the supersession of reason by faith, as though one organ of apprehension took the place of, or overrode, another. It is the enlightenment of reason by faith enabling it to do its own work better. . . The good eyesight, the mind that sees straight, is a gift of the Spirit widely shared in greater or less degree by unbelievers and believers alike. The one claim which we Christians cannot help making is that our faith gives us the right perspective. Conversion is being lifted out of the side seat in front and put down in the centre further back."²⁹

The only test or verification possible is the persistent criticism and judgment of reason. In this Leonard Hodgson has the support of Bishop Butler who declared,

" Reason is indeed the only faculty wherewith to judge concerning anything, even revelation itself."³⁰

This reason, says Hodgson, is as much the gift of God as faith.

6. Natural and Revealed Religion

If the distinction between natural and revealed religion proved unacceptable to the students of comparative religion, it proved equally difficult for the theologians. On the one hand

Hensley Henson saw Christianity as the most highly developed of natural religions³¹ and John Caird described it as 'natural religion elevated and transmuted into revealed'.³² On the other hand William Temple claimed that all existence is in some sense revelation, and, as we have seen, Soderblom (the second archbishop among Gifford lecturers) spoke of revelation known in other religions than Christianity. Even the further distinction between general and special revelation was unsatisfactory to John Baillie.³³ Over against these variants must be set the uncompromising position of Barth and Brunner, which asserts "that either Christianity is not a religion along with others, or if it is a religion, nothing else is".³⁴

In Revelation and Religion H.H. Farmer attempted to give what he calls in the introduction a "theological interpretation of religion" from the standpoint of orthodox Christian affirmations. He asserted that in the Christian revelation the essence of all living religion is disclosed. Through an analysis of Christian worship he demonstrated that Christianity is normative for other religions.

" The living essence of religion is revealed once and for all, in its sole perfect manifestation, in the Christian revelation and in the relation with God which that revelation makes possible for men, and it is exemplified in other religions in varying degrees of incompleteness, fragmentariness, distortion and perversion. In other words, there is given to us through the Christian

revelation the normative concept of religion."³⁵

The various types of religion he submitted to critical examination he found to be inadequate or incomplete.

Farmer's lectures served only to confirm what had been apparent from the beginning, namely, that Lord Gifford's attempt to exclude 'so called miraculous revelation' was vain, largely because of the difficulty of finding an agreed distinction between natural and revealed religion. At any rate from early days it seemed quite proper to those appointed that the Christian religion should furnish the subject matter of Gifford lectures so long as no escape was sought in authoritarian dogma and so long as rational investigation was applied to Christianity as it would be to any other religion. We now turn to some of these earlier studies.

7. John Caird and A.M.Fairbairn

Caird and Fairbairn were the first to use the lectureship for the examination of Christian thought in relationship to natural theology. Fairbairn's lectures appear to have been used in the preparation of his Philosophy of the Christian Religion, although no acknowledgment is made. In this volume he outlined the philosophical problems involved in a faith which accepts a personal incarnation of God. Fairbairn's book is a good example of a work written with the two-fold purpose of showing the Christian believer that his faith is philosophically sound ^{and} demonstrating to the unbeliever the reasonableness of the faith.

John Caird, who was still living in ^{what} might be termed the 'Science of Religion' decades, resisted the view that philosophy should confine itself to the study of natural religion, ignoring the peculiarities of Christianity and taking cognisance of it only in so far as it agrees with natural religion. He comments,

" It is just that in which Christianity differs from all the pre-Christian religions which realises, for the first time, the true idea of religion. As the absolute and only perfect form of that idea, Christianity, whilst it explains the latent significance of all that was true in the imperfect religions, at the same time transcends, and in transcending, transmutes and annuls or supersedes them."³⁶

It is in this sense that "Christianity interprets natural religion to itself."³⁷ From this starting point Caird goes on to demonstrate that the Christian doctrine of the nature of God fulfils the demands of reason. He examines at some length varying theories of incarnation and atonement, rejecting those which, in his judgment, cannot stand at the bar of reason. His final conclusion is that the man who has no faith in God cannot answer the questions posed by the world, but that belief in God, which is shown by the argument to be not unreasonable, at least offers tentative and perhaps more than tentative answers to the questions posed.

8. Otto Pfleiderer and H.M.Gwatkin

Otto Pfleiderer was one of the first theologians to be appointed to a Gifford Chair. The second volume of his lectures

traces the development of the Christian faith from Judaism through the theology of the early Church, the Fathers and the Scholastics to what he regards as the climax in reformation theology. He proceeds cautiously in the first volume to discuss philosophical rather than theological problems. Starting from the viewpoint of thinkers like Locke, Toland and Tindal, he asks just how much we can learn of God from morality and science. Both need religion for their completion. Of science he writes,

" That which is a task for science, an ideal that it has always to strive after and yet will never completely attain - namely, the highest Idea of Truth that completes and concludes all knowledge - is possessed by religion. Religion, however, does not possess it in the form of conceptual knowledge that satisfies the scientific thinking, but in the form corresponding to the presentient soul, of the symbol or of the significant sign."³⁸

Thus faith answers all the problems raised by science and morality for theistic philosophy. Personal faith and religious experience provide practical verification of the religious view of the world.

Pfleiderer recognises the problems raised for traditional Christianity by the advancement of scientific knowledge, and at the conclusion of his historical survey anticipates some of the issues to be faced by Bultmann and Tillich.

" History shows by many examples that a traditional faith which has remained too far behind the advanced knowledge of a later time gradually fades away, because it is always less able to strike its roots in the consciousness of the generations as they renew their life. Suppose that this were also to hold good of the inherited faith of the

Christian Churches, should we then have to expect in an indefinite future the euthanasia of the Christian religion? This inference, as it appears to me, would only have to be affirmed, if the position were established that the ecclesiastical faith were so immutable in its essence that it could undergo no sort of transformation, no adaptation to a new consciousness in time, without denying its principle itself."³⁹

Quite understandably he regards the Protestant version of Christianity as more able to make the necessary adjustments than the traditional Roman Catholic interpretation, and he looks forward to a new formulation of Protestantism "as will stand in harmony with the secular knowledge of the present, and no longer exact from us any sacrifice of reason".⁴⁰ The aims of Bultmann and Tillich could hardly be better expressed.

Gwatkin, who was writing after a further decade of Gifford lectures, did not need to tread so warily in his approach to revealed religion. He discussed revelation in general and showed the inadequacy of any non-Christian revelation. The only kind of revelation that could fully satisfy man's needs would be the kind of revelation that was in fact given in the life and death of Jesus Christ.

"A philosophy might touch reason, a religion feeling, a law action; but none of them would appeal to human nature as a whole."⁴¹

Only an incarnational revelation can satisfy, which is another way of saying what Temple was to say later, that natural theology needs revelation for its completion and in particular the Christian revelation.

9. William Temple

Among those who were committed by their calling to the Christian faith there could be no sturdier champion of natural theology than William Temple. For him every aspect of religion is rightly in the purview of natural theology. Revelation is not to be taken as purely self-authenticating.

" There neither is, nor can be, any element in human experience which may claim exemption from examination at the bar of reason."⁴²

The apparently arbitrary distinction between truths of reason and truths of revelation had been, in Temple's judgment, proved unsatisfactory, especially when understood to imply that the truths of revelation are like museum pieces to be inspected reverently but not to be touched. He writes of

" the back-wash from the excessive emphasis put on authority in an earlier period, and the consequent false division which allocated some whole departments of belief to Revelation, leaving others as the proper sphere of Natural Theology."⁴³

Thus it was illogical that the existence of God should be in the sphere of natural theology while the nature of God could only be known through revelation. If Aquinas had been right this distinction might have been valid but the two-source theory of knowledge had proved inadequate. So Temple wanted the Christian faith in its entirety to be subjected to examination by reason, but those who examine it must understand what they are examining.

" Criticism must be sympathetic, or it will completely miss the mark; but it must also be dispassionate and relentless."⁴⁴

If positive proof of theological propositions is no longer possible and the main function of natural theology is the criticism of alleged revelation, then the task of the natural theologian is analogous to that of the customs inspector, whose tick on the suitcase carries the negative implication that it contains no dutiable goods yet gives no positive indication of the contents. Natural theology might declare some religious beliefs false and they are not allowed past the barrier; other beliefs are allowed past the barrier on the grounds that there is nothing inherently unreasonable or contradictory in them, but natural theology is not in a position to affirm their truth. The furthest natural theology could go would be in terms of possibility and maybe probability. This is the way William Temple takes us, demonstrating the reasonableness of the Christian interpretation of reality, but concluding that

" Natural Theology ends in a hunger for that Divine Revelation which it began by excluding from its purview. Rightly sifting with relentless criticism every argument, it knows what manner of Voice that must be which shall promise relief to mankind; but the Voice is not its own, nor can it judge the message that is spoken. "Come unto me . . . and I will give you rest"; it is not Philosophy that can estimate the right of the Speaker to issue that invitation or to make that promise; that right can be proved or disproved only by the experiment of life."⁴⁵

Natural theology might thus take a man so far up William James's 'Faith-Ladder' but finally he himself must make the existential leap or take to the wings of faith according to one's taste in metaphors.

10. Karl Barth

If natural theology has no sturdier supporter than Temple it has no doughtier opponent than Karl Barth. " I am an avowed opponent of all natural theology," he wrote in reply to the invitation to become a Gifford lecturer. He would accept Temple's conclusion that revelation is finally the only means by which a man can know God, but natural theology, far from being a road to God, is a cul-de-sac. Barth's justification of his acceptance of the invitation after his initial demur was that natural theology can only exist in antithesis to another totally different theology. He proposed to serve natural theology by expounding this other theology, which, in his judgment, affirms what natural theology denies. He wrote,

" 'Natural Theology' has to make itself known, demonstrate itself and maintain itself over against this other theology by distinguishing itself from it and protesting against it. How could it do otherwise ? It has at any rate never done otherwise with vigour and success. When 'Natural Theology' has this opponent no longer in view, it is notorious how soon it tends to become arid and listless. And when its conflict with this adversary no longer attracts attention, it is also notorious that interest too in 'Natural Theology' soon tends to flag. Why then should the service not be rendered it of presenting to it once more this its indispensable opponent, since the requirement is that 'Natural Theology' shall here be served ? "⁴⁶

" It can only be to the good of 'Natural Theology' to be able once again to measure itself as the truth - if it is the truth! - by that which from its point of view is the greatest of errors."⁴⁷

Barth then proceeded to expound the Confessio Scotica of 1560. He regards religion as an essentially divine activity, while natural theology is a human occupation. Religion, as typified in the Confessio Scotica, culminates in prayer; natural theology has no need of prayer at the beginning or the end.⁴⁸

Because Barth denies the very possibility of natural theology so firmly we shall need, at a later stage, to look at the case he establishes more closely. Barth does indeed serve natural theology by showing what happens when we dispense with the services of reason and rely on self-authenticated revelation.

11. Niebuhr and Brunner

Barth's deep distrust of natural theology is due to his conviction that man is infected by sin and that his reason is likewise infected. A similar if not so profound distrust is found in the thought of Niebuhr and Brunner. Niebuhr gave his first series of lectures in the spring of 1939 and the second series in the early weeks of the war - a fitting time to raise questions concerning the nature and destiny of man. War, for Niebuhr, is not the blind result of economic forces but a symptom of man's disease. Man is a sinner and his whole being, including his reason, is riddled with the disease.

" Disease in any part of the organism affects the whole. . . It is not possible to exempt "reason" or any other human faculty from the disease of sin."⁴⁹

This implies that natural theology can never succeed in its quest,

for man is blind to his own blindness and is thus completely misled by reason in matters concerning God.

" Only in a religion of revelation . . . can man discover the root of sin to be within himself."⁵⁰

This revelation is self-authenticating and man's reason is in no position to pass judgment on it. The revelation must be accepted existentially. Niebuhr tells us,

" This person, this other "Thou", cannot be understood until he speaks to us; until his behaviour is clarified by the "word" which comes out of the ultimate and transcendent unity of his spirit."⁵¹

Niebuhr allows that there is a 'general' revelation which is available to all men and it shows God as Creator, but there is something more.

" The assurance of faith that the nature and character of God are such that He has resources of love and redemption transcending His judgments is not something which may be known in terms of "general" revelation. It is the most distinctive content of special revelation. It must be observed that, once this character of God is apprehended in terms of special revelation, common human experience can validate it."⁵²

The meaning of the last sentence is not quite clear. It seems to be saying something about 'validation' but is really only saying that once a man has accepted the faith, he knows in his inmost being that he has accepted it. It is not an appeal to reason.

The same pattern of thought is discernible in Brunner's lectures, Christianity and Civilisation, delivered some eight years later at St. Andrews. Man's sin is seen once more in his

setting himself in the centre of the picture and thinking that by the efforts of reason he can master the universe. This is idolatry

" Reverence for the quantum is, so to speak, the new version of the worship of the golden calf. It is an inevitable consequence of the objectivist conception of truth : The object is the truth."⁵³

Brunner distinguishes between 'God-truth' and 'world-truths'. The latter we discover by the exercise of reason; the former always comes as a revelation, and even in revealing himself God does not become an object of my knowledge.⁵⁴ Man is given dominion over nature and the power and right to investigate nature by means of his own God-given reason.

" But the man who knows himself as bound by the word of the Creator, and responsible to Him, will not misuse his scientific knowledge of the world by using his reason to raise himself up against the Creator and to emancipate himself from Him by a false pretence of autonomy."⁵⁵

Moreover faith in God is not to be understood as the acceptance of truths about God; faith consists in meeting God. This is why natural theology is ineffective; even more it is a kind of idolatry.⁵⁶

In attacking the claims of natural theology to establish a man-made religion Niebuhr and Brunner are striking at a position no longer defended by natural theologians, and in attacking this extreme position they ignore the possibility of humbler services being rendered by natural theology as an impartial critic of revelation.

12. Tillich and Bultmann

Brunner touched on a problem to be faced by both Tillich and Bultmann when he asked concerning 'God-truth',

" Is it then historical truth ? Yes and no. Yes, for it is in history that this revealed secret encounters me as truth. No, for it is the eternal God who now speaks to me in this historical revelation. Thereby the historical event ceases to be historical and becomes living presence."⁵⁷

For Tillich man himself is the existential question, but one cannot derive from the existential question a satisfactory answer. This is the flaw in natural theology. It appears that man cannot lift himself up by his own shoestrings. On the other hand unless he has seen his need, he cannot see the relevance of revelation. The revelatory answer has no meaning unless the existential question has been asked. Tillich sees here the opening for natural theology.

" The truth of naturalism is that it insists on the human character of the existential question. Man as man knows the question of God. He is estranged but not cut off, from God. This is the foundation for the limited right of what traditionally was called "natural theology". Natural theology was meaningful to the extent that it gave an analysis of the human situation and the question of God implied in it. One side of the traditional arguments for the existence of God usually does this, in so far as they elucidate the dependent, transitory, and relational nature of finite human existence. But, in developing the other side of these arguments, natural theology tried to derive theological affirmations from the analysis of man's

finitude. This, however, is an impossible task.

. . . For God is manifest only through God."⁵⁸

Natural theology is thus allowed the function of asking questions it cannot answer. This may not be such a mean task as it first appears. It is said that an experiment is a question put to nature, and in scientific experiment it is important to know what questions should be put to nature. The natural theologian puts his questions to nature in the first instance and in the absence of an answer may turn to 'supernature'. At least the natural theologian can learn to ask the right questions.

It is important to note that Tillich believes that "man is estranged but not cut off from God". Barth would not even allow that man could ask the right questions. Tillich allows that natural theology can frame the questions but they can only be answered by revelatory experience, which in turn must be translated into language which can be understood by the questioner. So he speaks of "apologetic theology"⁵⁹, which is by no means to be identified with natural theology but derives its form from the kind of question being asked whether it be in reference to Jewish legalism, Greek scepticism or twentieth century nihilism. Tillich's lectures form a part of his larger Systematic Theology, but nevertheless the volume containing the Gifford lectures constitutes an attempt to produce "apologetic theology" revealing the Christ as the answer to man's existential question.

Where Tillich goes directly to man as the existential question, Bultmann asks first what is the meaning of history.

" What is the core of history ? What is its real subject ? The answer is : man."⁶⁰

Just as Tillich's existential question cannot be answered from the question itself, so Bultmann's question of history cannot be answered by an examination of history. The answer comes from an eschatological event outside history, which is another way of saying that it cannot be reached by natural theology. Yet the question and answer must be brought together at some point, and this is in fact a point in history, but a recurring point. "The Christ" is the answer for Bultmann as for Tillich.

" It is the paradox of the Christian message that the eschatological event, according to Paul and John, is not to be understood as a dramatic cosmic catastrophe but a happening within history, beginning with the appearance of Jesus Christ and in continuity with this occurring again and again in history, but not as the kind of historical development which can be confirmed by any historian. It becomes an event repeatedly in preaching and faith. Jesus Christ is the eschatological event not as an established fact of past time but as repeatedly present, as addressing you and me here and now in preaching."⁶¹

The meaning of history, for Bultmann, lies always in the present. Meaning is not to be found at the end of a pilgrimage of thought but in the eschatological moment. So he concluded his lectures with these words,

" Always in your present lies the meaning in history, and you cannot see it as a spectator, but only in your

responsible decisions. In every moment slumbers the possibility of being the eschatological moment. You must awaken it."⁶²

Presumably, in Bultmann's view, to be a natural theologian is to be a spectator - to attempt to find meaning through considered judgments made from the touch-line, when real meaning is in the scrum! Yet on the principle that the onlooker sees more of the game a case may be made out for submitting the discoveries of the eschatological moment to the impartial examination of the spectator.

13 Tentative Conclusions

The discussion of the various defenders of faith in this chapter has brought to light some of the fundamental problems of natural theology. Lord Gifford was right in recognising that religion involves 'true and felt' knowledge. We could hardly give the name of religion to a formal conclusion reached at the end of an argument. "It is cold at the summit of Mount Everest," might well be the conclusion of such an argument, but it is just another fact about the universe. Even if I climb Mount Everest myself I can only confirm a fact about the universe though I may feel its truth more intensely! The natural theologian must recognise that even if he were able to offer a conclusive proof of God's existence he would not have produced a religion until he had knelt down before the fact. Otherwise even the existence of God would just be another fact about the universe. If we take Barth's advice we shall save ourselves the trouble of a

a fruitless search by kneeling down before the Fact forthwith and submitting to the Word of God. Yet in spite of Barth there are questions to be asked. How can one distinguish between two apparently contradictory "words" of God? For a number of the lecturers we have discussed there can be no appeal to reason. For others reason is the judge at whose bar revelation must be vindicated.

All the thinkers we have discussed are agreed that faith is of the essence of religion. None has claimed that reason could construct a religion. Indeed it appears at times as if Barth and his friends are shadow-boxing with an adversary who does not exist. C.A.Campbell, whose lectures are discussed in another chapter, helps us when he makes the clear distinction between (1) reason as an organ for the apprehension of the Divine, and (2) reason as the ultimate arbiter upon claims to such apprehension.⁶³ A religion based on the findings of human reason might well be described as idolatry, but a religion which disallows the criticism of reason is in danger of being confused with credulity. Despair of any hope of reaching God through reason might lead to an existentialist 'leap' and this may indeed produce 'felt' knowledge but if truth is claimed there is no escape from the interrogation of reason.

Part 1. Chapter 7.Reference Notes

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|----|-------------------------------|----|-------------------------------|
| 1 | Tennyson, <u>In Memoriam</u> | 34 | See <u>G.33.</u> pp.32-3 |
| 2 | <u>G.53.</u> p. vii | 35 | <u>G.33.</u> pp.34-5 |
| 3 | <u>G.95.</u> p. 35 | 36 | <u>G.22.</u> Vol. 1. p.27 |
| 4 | <u>G.22.</u> Vol.1. p.42 | 37 | <u>G.22.</u> Vol. 1. p.24 |
| 5 | <u>G.52.</u> p. 422 | 38 | <u>G.77.</u> Vol. 1. pp. 97-8 |
| 6 | <u>G.103.</u> Vol.2. pp.8-9 | 39 | <u>G.77.</u> Vol. 2. p. 354 |
| 7 | <u>G.54.</u> p. 47 | 40 | <u>G.77.</u> Vol. 2. p. 355 |
| 8 | <u>G.54.</u> p. 137 | 41 | <u>G.43.</u> Vol. 1. p. 207 |
| 9 | <u>G.54.</u> p. 44 | 42 | <u>G.95.</u> p. 17 |
| 10 | <u>G.54.</u> p. 198 | 43 | <u>G.95.</u> p. 8 |
| 11 | <u>G.54.</u> p. 222 | 44 | <u>G.95.</u> p. 27 |
| 12 | <u>G.54.</u> pp. 198-9 | 45 | <u>G.95.</u> p. 520 |
| 13 | <u>G.54.</u> pp. 220-1 | 46 | <u>G.7.</u> pp. 6-7 |
| 14 | <u>G.8.</u> p. 340 | 47 | <u>G.7.</u> p. 7 |
| 15 | <u>G.8.</u> p. 344 | 48 | <u>G.7.</u> p. 244 |
| 16 | <u>G.8.</u> p. 345 | 49 | <u>G.73.</u> Vol. 1. p.293 |
| 17 | <u>G.63.</u> V2 p. 176 | 50 | <u>G.73.</u> Vol. 1. p. 18 |
| 18 | <u>G.63.</u> Vol.2. p. 69. | 51 | <u>G.73.</u> Vol. 1. p.139 |
| 19 | <u>G.63.</u> Vol.2. pp. 75-6 | 52 | <u>G.73.</u> Vol. 1. p.154 |
| 20 | <u>G.63.</u> Vol.2. p. 77 | 53 | <u>G.18.</u> Vol. 1. p. 31 |
| 21 | <u>G.63.</u> Vol.2. p. 79 | 54 | <u>G.18.</u> Vol. 1. p. 39 |
| 22 | <u>G.63.</u> Vol.2. p.131 | 55 | <u>G.18.</u> Vol. 1. p. 89 |
| 23 | <u>G.3.</u> p. 65 | 56 | <u>G.18.</u> Vol. 1. p. 42 |
| 24 | <u>G.3.</u> p. 66 | 57 | <u>G.18.</u> Vol. 1. p. 40 |
| 25 | <u>G.3.</u> p. 90 | 58 | <u>G.98.</u> p. 15 |
| 26 | <u>G.3.</u> p. 256 | 59 | <u>G.98.</u> p. 18 |
| 27 | <u>G.3.</u> p. 259 | 60 | <u>G.19.</u> p. 139 |
| 28 | <u>G.49.</u> Vol. 1. p.80. | 61 | <u>G.19.</u> pp. 151-2 |
| 29 | <u>G.49.</u> Vol. 1. pp.104-5 | 62 | <u>G.19.</u> p. 155 |
| 30 | Butler, <u>Analogy,</u> II 3. | 63 | <u>G.23.</u> p. 18 |
| 31 | <u>G.47.</u> p.23 | | |
| 32 | <u>G.22.</u> Vol. 1. p. 24 | | |
| 33 | <u>G.3.</u> p. 188 | | |

Chapter Eight

The Historical Approach to Natural Theology

1	The Development of Theology	page 184
2	The Pre-Socratic Thinkers	184
3	Socrates, Plato and Aristotle	186
4	Later Development in Greek Thought	187
5	The Roman Contribution	188
6	Christian Beginnings	189
7	The Middle Ages	190
8	Descartes and After	191
	Reference Notes	192

1. The Development of Theology

A number of Gifford lecturers, as we have noted, traced the development of religion among primitive peoples. Theology is the intellectual aspect of religion, the formation of religious concepts, the application of reason to religion. In this chapter we turn our attention to those who have traced the historical development of theology. Where there is religion there is always theology, however elementary, but primitive man did not separate the two. Natural theology proper begins when man is self-consciously theological, when he begins to ask how much he can understand of the nature of deity by the exercise of his mental faculties. It is man's attempt to become scientific about his religion. It may sometimes take the form of criticisms of the grosser anthropomorphisms of natural religion; at other times it may be constructive in seeking to establish the existence of a First Cause or a Prime Mover by the exercise of reason. Because it is this kind of exercise it found its birth among the Greeks rather than the Hebrews, and those lecturers who traced its history turned to Greek thinkers for the beginning of the story.

2. Pre-Socratic Thinkers

James Adam in The Religious Teachers of Greece traced the development of theology in the thought of the philosophers and poets of Greece. What he describes as "the action and interaction of the two rival principles of orthodoxy and dissent"¹ led to

philosophising against the background of Homeric and Hesiodic religious ideas. He traced the two main streams of development on the one hand from Homer and Hesiod through Pindar and Aeschylus to Sophocles and on the other hand from Thales through Xenophanes, Heraclitus and Parmenides to Anaxagoras and the Sophists. The two streams come together in Euripides, "the philosopher upon the stage". But on the whole the effect of Euripides upon traditional beliefs was destructive and it was left to Socrates, Plato and their successors to build new foundations.

Some years before, Lewis Campbell, taking a similar theme at St. Andrews, had written Religion in Greek Literature, in which he covered much the same ground, but concentrated rather more on primitive religion in Greece. Both gave some attention to Socrates and Plato; Lewis Campbell has a final chapter on Aristotle.

More recently Werner Jaeger lectured on The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers. In his preface he suggested the alternative title, The Origin of Natural Theology and the Greeks, and this work is particularly relevant to our quest. He wrote,

" Theology is . . . a specific creation of the Greek mind. . . Theology is a mental attitude which is characteristically Greek, and has something to do with the great importance which the Greek thinkers attribute to the logos, for the word theologia means the approach to God or the gods (theoi) by means of the logos. To the Greeks God became a problem."²

Jaeger covered much the same ground as his predecessors, but concentrated on the pre-Socratic thinkers concluding with Anaxagoras and Diogenes.

3. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle

J.H. Stirling gave pride of place to Anaxagoras in his discussion of the proofs of the existence of God, but went on to treat at greater length the three great philosophers and their quest for deity. Edward Caird in The Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers gave a brief survey of the pre-Socratic philosophers and then concentrated on the development of theology in Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy. Aristotle was the first to use the word 'theology', but Caird describes Plato as the originator of theology and as the first systematic theologian. Here is the seeding ground not only of natural theology but of any kind of theology, for if the substance of Christian theology was to come from the Biblical revelation its methods and aims would be drawn from Greece. Edward Caird concluded,

" It was the thought of Greece which, in this as in other departments, gave to the philosophical enquiries of Christendom a definite method and a definite aim. It was from Greece that the Fathers of the Church borrowed the forms of thought, the fundamental conceptions of nature and human life, in short, all the general presuppositions which they brought to the interpretation of the Christian faith."³

Numerous other lecturers, of course, draw on Platonic and Aristotelian thought but only Caird treats it at such length.

4. Later Development in Greek Thought

In his second volume Edward Caird traced the development of Greek theology in post-Aristotelian thought, devoting four lectures to Stoicism and an equal number to Plotinus and Neo-Platonism, finally summing up in the concluding lecture what he conceives to be the contribution of Greek philosophy to Christian thought.

Dean Inge was extremely critical of Caird's treatment of Plotinus⁴ and for his own Gifford contribution produced what has become one of the standard works on Neo-Platonism, The Philosophy of Plotinus. Dean Inge sees Neo-Platonism as the link between Greek and Christian thought and complains of the hiatus caused by the fact that students of Christian dogma are often ignorant of Greek philosophy and students of Greek philosophy consider that their interests end with the Stoics and Epicureans.⁵ Inge complains because natural theology is regarded as an intellectual exercise rather than a spiritual one, and he pleads for a combination of intellectual search and spiritual insight which he believes is afforded by mysticism.

" Mysticism is a spiritual philosophy which demands the concurrent activity of thought, will and feeling. It assumes from the outset that these three elements of our personality, which in real life are never sundered from each other, point towards the same goal, and if rightly used will conduct us thither. Further it holds that only by the consecration of these three faculties in the service of the same quest can a man become effectively what he is potentially, a partaker of the Divine nature and a

denizen of the spiritual world."⁶

Dean Inge is in danger of falling into the old confusion between religion and theology. Mysticism is religion even though it may, through its insights, furnish a theology. It must not be identified with natural theology. No doubt such a misunderstanding has arisen because mystical insight appears to furnish knowledge of God as opposed to the knowledge of God embodied in the creeds of orthodox religions, and indeed at times appears to confirm orthodox faith. Because of the spontaneous nature of mystical insight it appears to be direct knowledge, but fundamentally it is faith-knowledge and subject to the limitations of faith. Plotinus belongs to the history of religion and the history of theology and Dean Inge recognises this when he describes him as "a spiritual director, a prophet and not only a thinker."⁷

5. The Roman Contribution

Roman thought had comparatively little to contribute to the development of natural theology except the name, given by Varro. Consequently little had been written in the Gifford lectures. Warde Fowler's Religious Experience of the Roman People is an account of religion rather than theology though he provides a useful account of stoic thought. Lanciani's New Tales of Old Rome is little more than a guide book of Roman antiquities. J.M. Stirling has a lecture in which he traces the development of Roman thought on religion and deals briefly with Cicero's contribution.

6. Christian Beginnings

William Wallace, whose untimely death due to a ^{bi}cycle ^{accident} accident prevented the full preparation of his lectures for publication, made a historical survey in his first series. Unfortunately only three of these lectures are published, including one with the intriguing title, The Natural Theology of Christ. Edward Caird in his second series on The Evolution of Religion gave considerable attention to the beginnings of Christian theology but with little reference to the concept of natural theology. Similarly Otto Pflleiderer devoted eight of the ten lectures in his second series to Christian beginnings up to the Alexandrian Fathers. The lack of balance of this survey is sufficiently indicated by the fact that the two remaining lectures are devoted to Augustine and Roman theology and Luther and Protestantism respectively.

A better balanced survey was given by Gwatkin in the second volume of The Knowledge of God, though this is a history of doctrine rather than of natural theology. Perhaps the best balanced and most comprehensive account of the philosophical approach to religion is given by John Watson in the first volume of The Interpretation of Religious Experience. He traces the Hebrew and Greek origins of Christian theology and from the early conflicts with Jews and pagans traces the development from Origen to Aquinas, making special mention of Dante, Eckhart and Descartes and the modern philosophers down to Kant and Hegel.

7. The Middle Ages

John Watson, as has been indicated, did justice to the middle ages in his account, but Pfleiderer slips quietly from Augustine to Luther while Aquinas does not so much as appear in Gwatkin's index though he is mentioned in a brief catalogue of great thinkers. J.H. Stirling devoted part of a lecture to Anselm but scarcely mentioned Aquinas and went on to discuss Hume and his successors.

This important period has been covered by Etienne Gilson and less thoroughly by Christopher Dawson. Gilson's work, published originally as L'esprit de la philosophie medievale, discusses the problems involved in combining faith and philosophy. He raises the question of the possibility of a Christian Philosophy and challenges the view that nothing happened of any importance in the realm of religious thought between Plotinus and Descartes.

" If St. Augustine merely re-edited Plato, if St. Thomas and Duns Scotus are merely Aristotle misunderstood, it is quite useless to study them at all . . . and the existence of a yawning gap between Plotinus and Descartes will have to be admitted. . . On the supposition that St. Augustine added something to Plato, and that St. Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus added something to Aristotle, the history of mediaeval thought will have a proper object."⁸

Gilson contends that the thinkers of the middle ages did make such a contribution.

Christopher Dawson, who dealt with the general relationship between religion and culture in his first volume, entitled

Religion and Culture, focussed attention on European culture in his Religion and the Rise of Western Culture, which deals mainly with the mediaeval period.

8. Descartes and After

Arnold Toynbee's An Historian's Approach To Religion has much to say about the earlier developments of religious thought, but is included here because the second and larger section deals with religious developments in the west from the seventeenth century. Toynbee's account is of the interplay of religion and history and the development of natural theology is purely an incidental part of the story.

It would be tedious to list all the Gifford lecturers who have commented on Descartes, Spinoza, Hume, Kant and Hegel. In addition to the lecturers already mentioned who dealt with the later period, Pringle-Pattison in his Idea of God gave fairly close attention to Hume, Kant and Berkeley, tracing the later philosophies which arose as a result of or in reaction to their thought. Campbell Fraser, while not making a strictly historical approach, discussed at length the attitude of recent philosophers to theism. Kant's philosophy of religion is examined at some length in Kroner's The Primacy of Faith, while, as we have seen, the shadow of Hegel is inevitably cast on the early lecturers. The more recent developments in philosophy are, of course, reflected in the lectures given in the last decade.

It is thus possible to trace the development of natural theology through the centuries from the Gifford lectures and the attempt to do this will be made in the second section of the thesis. It will be necessary, of course, to turn to other authorities from time to time and on occasion to let the thinkers of earlier ages speak for themselves.

<u>Part 1.</u>	<u>Chapter 8.</u>	<u>Reference Notes</u>
1	<u>G.1.</u>	p. 18
2	<u>G.51.</u>	p. 4
3	<u>G.21.</u>	p. 30
4	<u>G.50.V.1.</u>	pp. 19-20
5	<u>G.50.Vol.1.</u>	p. 13
6	<u>G.50.Vol.1.</u>	p. 5
7	<u>G.50.Vol.1.</u>	p. 7
8	<u>G.41.</u>	pp. 403-4

Chapter Nine

Some Conclusions

1	Some Negative Conclusions	page 194
2	The Sickness of Natural Theology	195
3	Natural Theology as Impartial Critic	196
4	Natural Theology as Metaphysical Speculation	197
5	Natural Theology and Faith	198
6	Natural Theology and Religious Insight	200
	Reference Notes	201

1. Some Negative Conclusions

Gifford lecturers are committed to the discussion of natural theology "in the widest sense of that term". Lord Gifford, however, widened the application to such an extent that some subjects, which can scarcely be termed natural theology even in its widest sense, have been legitimately included. Two of the subjects thus permitted but which are outside the realm of natural theology are Comparative Religion and non-theistic Ethics, that is, moral philosophy studied without reference to the existence of God.

Comparative Religion does not set out to judge the truth of the conceptions of deity formed by various peoples, but rather, as the name suggests, it compares various religious ideas. When Sir James Frazer defined natural theology as "the conception which man, without the aid of revelation, has formed to himself of the existence and nature of a God or gods,"¹ he was in effect equating natural theology and comparative religion. It could be argued that each of the religions has its own "natural" theology, but Lord Gifford recognised that natural theology is concerned with true knowledge of God. The one thing that emerges from the study of comparative religion is that the varied "natural" theologies cannot all be true. There is need, therefore, for a natural theology which stands over and above the varied "natural" theologies against which they may be judged. Natural

theology, in Lord Gifford's sense of the term, does not arise from natural religion but from man's attempts to reason about religion. Once this ~~fact~~ is grasped the fact that the distinctions between natural and revealed religion, and general and special revelation are uncertain and ambiguous does not matter so much, for all theologies based on religious insights must be judged by a theology based on reason.

If Ethics is studied without any reference to deity then it is clearly not theology of any sort. Thus some of the studies we discussed in chapter six, while quite admissible under the Gifford foundation, are not natural theology.

2. The Sickness of Natural Theology

Not one of all the Gifford lecturers in all the seventy five years has claimed to be able to prove the existence of God. The confidence of earlier generations has been profoundly shaken. Again and again religious truth has been recognised as depending on faith rather than reason. A few of the lecturers have declared natural theology to be utterly impotent even to argue about religion. Earlier lecturers saw the possibility of natural theology pointing the way even if it could not prove, and more recently there has been an increasing confidence expressed by some lecturers in natural theology's ability to support a theistic view even if it cannot prove the case completely. Natural theology's malaise does not appear now, as it did at one time, to be a sickness unto death. Natural

theology can never regain the authority it enjoyed in the centuries before Hume and Kant. It can never regain the pre-Darwinian vigour it displayed in the work of Paley and other nineteenth century apologists, but it can still make out a case even if it cannot prove it. This seems to be the consensus of opinion among certain recent lecturers, though others would still demur.

3. Natural Theology as Impartial Critic

Those who would not go so far as to suggest that natural theology can make out a positive case might nevertheless agree that there is a task for natural theology as the impartial critic of religious concepts. The provision that Gifford lecturers may be of any religion or none providing that they be "able reverent men, true thinkers, sincere lovers of and earnest inquirers after truth" is an indication that Lord Gifford saw natural theology in one of its aspects as an impartial examination and criticism of religious concepts. Religion, as we have seen, is prior to theology. The anthropologists have demonstrated this in the case of primitive religions; the theologians have insisted on the primacy of faith in the Christian religion. Natural theology is thus the rational criticism of something that is not necessarily rational in its origin. The business of natural theology is, as an early lecturer put it, to construe religion rather than construct it. Clement Webb regarded natural theology "as the result of reflection on a religious experience mediated in every case through a historical religion".² This process

of critical reflection had started in the Greek world with men like Xenophanes. Commenting on the dictum of Hobbes that the mysteries of religion like pills do more good when swallowed whole, H.J.Paton says,

" A philosopher has no choice: he cannot always swallow his religion whole. Whatever may be the clinical results, there are times when - in spite of Hobbes - he has got to chew it."³

Unless religious experience is to be a museum piece, labelled 'Please do not touch', then there must be a place for such impartial criticism and judgment. Some of the lecturers have seen this as the chief function of natural theology.

4. Natural Theology as Metaphysical Speculation

It is clear that Lord Gifford believed that it was possible by metaphysical speculation to construct a system of thought in which God would be displayed as the supreme, and indeed the only, reality. We found in our examination of the lectures classified as metaphysical that frequent resort was made to revelation, personal faith or a kind of mysticism. Some have arrived at the end of the argument without any theistic conclusion. We concluded that metaphysical speculation only ends in faith where there was faith at the beginning; at best metaphysics can offer a probability, a possibility or a hope. There are at least four possible approaches to metaphysics in relation to religious truth.

(1) The philosopher may attempt with utter impartiality to draw metaphysical conclusions from the data furnished by the

natural world. The scientists among the Gifford lecturers hold out no hope of a satisfactory theistic conclusion from this line of enquiry. Recognising the limitations of such argument a philosopher may reach a point where he feels justified in making an existential leap either to faith or metaphysical assertion.

(2) The philosopher may attempt to construct a metaphysical scheme into which moral and religious experience fits, and which is therefore consistent with his faith. The early Hegelian lecturers fit into this category, as do Sorley, Taylor and De Burgh.

(3) As a variant the philosophical theologian may attempt to demonstrate the reasonableness of the metaphysic involved in his belief. H.H. Farmer described natural theology as

" the attempt to present theism as a reasonable and satisfying (indeed, the most reasonable and satisfying), though not logically demonstrative, world view."⁴

This well expresses William Temple's aim in Nature Man and God.

(4) The philosopher who is a Christian may unashamedly base his metaphysics on the foundation of his faith and erect what Gilson and others have called Christian Philosophy.

Whether any or all of these approaches can be described as natural theology will be discussed later.

5. Natural Theology and Faith

The theologians have acknowledged faith as the central factor in religion and have recognised the impotence of reason to produce a religion. Most, but not all, have concluded that

a religion acceptable to rational man must be subjected to critical examination at the bar of reason. Faith may go beyond the conclusions of reason but it must not be contrary to reason. If we accept religious truth on the grounds of absurdity, then as Paton put it⁵, we are indeed opening the floodgates to folly.

Man's changing and increasing knowledge of the universe may or may not shake his faith in God; it will inevitably make him think about God in different terms. The publication of John Robinson's Honest to God posed the problem to the popular mind in recent years, but the problem is as old as Xenophanes. Lord Haldane posed the problem early in this century when he neatly summed up the task of the Gifford lecturer.

" Two questions must confront a Gifford lecturer who seeks to try to give effect to Lord Gifford's purpose in the serious spirit in which it was meant. The first is : What do we mean by the word "God" ? The second is : How, in the light that in the twentieth century philosophy has cast on Reality, must he conceive and speak of Him?"⁶

In his own century Xenophanes was asking the same two fundamental questions. Tillich also asked the questions and saw the need for an "apologetic theology" which would answer in twentieth century terms the existential questions posed by twentieth century man. Natural theology may provide a critique of faith and may provide the bridge between modern philosophy and science and religious faith.

We shall need to examine more closely in their historical context the two possible relationships between faith and reason

suggested by the Credo ut intelligam of Anselm and the Intelligo ut credam sometimes attributed to Abelard. The very existence of natural theology depends upon man's ability to reason outside the realm of faith. This problem, as we shall see, has troubled theologians through the centuries.

6. Natural Theology and Religious Insight

In the course of our survey we have come across two different interpretations of natural theology, which it would be as well to clarify before we move on to the historical survey.

(1) Natural theology, on the one hand, is set over against "revealed religion". Scholars have tended to think of any knowledge of God that does not come from the Biblical tradition as natural theology. This kind of natural theology arises from primitive religion, religious insight or from the experience of mystics like Plotinus and his spiritual successors. There may well be a rational element in this "natural theology" as, of course, there is a rational element in any theology.

(2) Natural theology, on the other hand, is taken by some to involve only the efforts of unaided reason to reach religious truth, and perhaps we ought to add, if any.

There can be no doubt, except in the minds of Barthians, that natural theology of the first kind does exist and we shall look at the claims of mystical insight to produce knowledge of God. If natural theology is to be understood in the second sense then its scope will be considerably limited. Natural theology in the first sense claims knowledge of God; in the

second sense it claims the right to think about God with the hope of reaching knowledge.

Recent lecturers, no doubt influenced by Bubar's thought, have stressed that knowledge of God only comes by meeting or confrontation. Religion is concerned with an I-Thou relationship. When this relationship is discussed theologically it becomes an I-It relationship. If this is true then natural theology can never lead to a "knowledge" of God in a religious sense. At best it could lead to knowledge about God and perhaps only thoughts about God.

In the second part of the thesis we shall trace these various concepts of God in the history of man's thought. We shall begin with natural theology as the critic of religion for this is where the Greeks began .

Part 1.

Chapter 9.

Reference Notes

- 1 G.40. Vol. 1. p. 13
- 2 G.104. p. 32
- 3 G.75. p. 31
- 4 G.33. p. 8
- 5 G.75. p. 30
- 6 G.45. Vol. 1. p. 15

P A R T T W O

THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATURAL THEOLOGY

Chapter One

Natural Theology as the Critic of Religion

1	Reason and Religion	page 203
2	Xenophanes, the Reprover of Homer's Lies	204
3	Other Pre-Socratic Critics of Religion	205
4	Socrates, Plato and Aristotle as Critics of Religion	208
5	Varro and Cicero	209
6	Towards Christian Self-Criticism	214
7	Towards Reasonable Religion	216
8	David Hume : Scepticism and Faith	219
9	Kant : Towards a Reasoned Faith	224
10	Gifford Lecturers as Critics of Religion	229
	Reference Notes	231

1. Reason and Religion

The religious impulse comes from the depths of man's unconscious and reason can scarcely be said to play any significant part until man begins to frame religious concepts. Hume sought the origins of religion in fear of the strange and marvellous rather than in rational consideration of the natural. He did not think that primitive peoples had been led to a belief in God through any process of argument "but by a certain train of thinking, more suitable to their genius and capacity".¹ If there is an elementary train of thought in primitive religion it is overlaid, as Otto has suggested, by a strong non-rational element. Reason, as self-conscious critic, is a comparatively late comer to the religious field.

When reason does enter the field its task will be both destructive and constructive. It must measure the primitive concepts of religion against the knowledge discovered in other spheres and it must seek self-consistency in such elementary theology as there is. Reason must be the critic of religion. We may remind ourselves of Clement Webb's description of natural theology.

" Natural Theology is to be regarded not after the manner suggested by certain expressions in Lord Gifford's will, as a science consisting of truths reached altogether independently of a historical religion, but rather as the result of reflection on a religious experience mediated in every case through a historical religion."²

Such reflection on religious experience may ultimately lead to a

positive contribution to theology, but initially reason may perform the negative service of dismissing false belief. We trace now the course of natural theology in so far as the term can be used to describe the dispassionate consideration of religious truth.

2. Xenophanes, the Reprover of Homer's Lies

Xenophanes, as Werner Jaeger points out³, is the first of the Greek philosophers whom we can know as a personality. The picture that emerges from the scanty data is that of a satirist rather than a philosopher. We are told that "he also recited his own poems like a rhapsode".⁴ Jaeger dismisses the picture drawn by Gomperz and others of one who either recited Homer with the addition of his own verses, or recited Homer during the day for a living and gave his own comments at private parties in the evening. Jaeger sees him as a sincere critic of anthropomorphic religion and an intellectual revolutionary. He was a man who had seen through Homeric religion and therefore, in Jaeger's view, could not make a living from reciting such fables and retain his integrity. Xenophanes declared,

" Homer and Hesiod say that the gods
Do all manner of things which men would consider disgraceful:
Adultery, stealing, deceiving each other."⁵

It was the satirist, Timon, who described Xenophanes as the reprover of Homer's lies. God is good and the ancient legends are false; moreover there is only one god.

" One god is the highest among gods and men;
In neither his form nor his thought is he like unto mortals."⁶

Thus anthropomorphism is dismissed and never so clearly as in the two well known fragments :

" But if cattle and horses had hands, and were able
To paint with their hands, and to fashion such pictures as
men do,
Then horses would pattern the forms of the gods after horses,
And cows after cattle, giving them just such a shape
As those which they find in themselves."⁷

". . . The gods of the Ethiopians are black with snub noses,
While those of the Thracians are blond, with blue eyes and
red hair."⁸

Xenophanes is the first of a line of critics including Euripides, Plato, Aristotle and Cicero. There are echoes of Xenophanes in the early Christian apologists and St. Augustine.

If James Adam's interpretation of the fragments is correct Xenophanes moved on from his negative criticism of the Homeric and Hesiodic gods to the assertion that there is one god, who is uncreate, whose morality is sound, who is eternal and alike in every direction, finite and spherical and percipient in all his parts. Thus negative criticism leads to the formulation of a faith which is consistent with the moral ideals and the scientific world view held.

3. Other Pre-Socratic Critics of Religion

Even before the time of Xenophanes thinkers had been bringing criticism to bear upon religious concepts. It is in the sixth century that we can first trace the emergence of the modern idea of "myth". Originally the word *μῦθος* had been

used to describe any speech or story but in the time of the Milesian naturalists the word was coming to mean fabulous or unauthenticated as opposed to verifiable truth. Whereas Oceanus is described in a Homeric passage as the origin of things, Thales held that water is the origin of everything. So Oceanus is demythologised as water. If indeed Thales said, "Everything is full of gods," he may well have meant no more than, "Everything is full of living forces". It is clear that he was not using the term 'god' in any crude anthropomorphic sense.

Heraclitus¹⁰ was another stern and almost prophetic denouncer of popular religious concepts, whose most important contribution to religious philosophy was his teaching concerning the Logos. Criticisms of anthropomorphism are also implicit in the teaching of Anaximander and Anaximenes, but as we shall see they were more concerned to build up a positive account of reality.

Such negative criticism of religion does not necessarily lead to a reformed theology; it may indeed lead to atheism. Anaxagoras, a pupil of Anaximenes, undermined generally accepted religious ideas by his scientific speculations. James Adam commented,

" The ordinary Greek believed the sun and moon to be Gods: Anaxagoras robbed them of their divinity, and maintained that the sun was nothing but a red-hot mass of stone; while the moon, according to him, contained hills and ravines, and was inhabited like the planet on which we live."¹¹

This is one of the first of many conflicts between science and religion.

Criticisms of primitive conceptions of the gods are to be found in Pythagoreanism. In a story of a descent into Hades it is recorded of Pythagoras that

" he saw the soul of Hesiod, bound to a brazen pillar, and crying out, together with the soul of Homer, suspended from a tree, and surrounded by snakes, in return for what they had said about the gods."¹²

Hippocrates was not a natural theologian but in one of his comments we have what is perhaps the first protest against "the god of the gaps"¹³ - the use of theological explanation to fill the gaps in scientific knowledge. Hippocrates wrote :

" I do not think any disease is more divine or sacred than others. . . I think that those who first called this disease (sc. epilepsy) sacred were men such as there are still at the present day, magicians and purifiers and charlatans and impostors. They make use of the godhead to cloak and cover their own incapacity."¹⁴

Like Hippocrates, the dramatists were unaware that they were dealing in natural theology. Thought about the world had not been categorised and the physician and the poet were merely commenting on the world in general. Euripides scorns the anthropomorphic character of the gods and in one passage comes down on the side of atheism.¹⁵ We find homely philosophising about life and religion in the work of Aeschylus and Sophocles, but Euripides supremely is the philosopher-poet criticising commonly accepted religious concepts. The very

fact that the 'deus ex machina' became an accepted dramatic device is in itself a comment on the attitude of the dramatists towards the old-time religion. A god who can be let down in a crane can hardly be taken seriously.

4. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle as Critics of Religion

Socrates was accused of impiety because he did not accept current ideas concerning the nature of the gods. He insisted on asking questions and religious concepts were not immune from his stringent analysis. Professor H.H.Price's description of Socrates as a 'linguistic analyst'¹⁶ is more than justified. Voices might come to him in moments of insight but, for a man like Socrates, whether religious ideas come through folk-lore or revelation they must stand up to the examination of reason. Socrates would have approved the fragment of Xenophanes :

" The gods have not revealed everything to men from the first,
But in time those who seek will find a better way."¹⁷

The judgments of Socrates are reflected in the work of Plato, who in the Republic condemns the Homeric conceptions of the gods and proposes a censorship of literature embodying crude ideas of the gods. Plato's lasting contribution, however, lies not in his critical approach but in his theological speculation which was to influence all future theology.

Similarly Aristotle criticised popular religion¹⁸ but his real gift to religious thought is in speculative metaphysics. In the period immediately following Aristotle the Stoics and Epicureans did little more than elaborate the religious ideas of the great era of Greek philosophy.

5. Varro and Cicero

It is to M. Terentius Varro (116-28 B.C.) that credit must go for the coining of the phrase 'Natural Theology', though his particular term might be rendered more accurately as 'physical theology'. The distinction between commonly accepted ideas of the gods and philosophical concepts of deity has been implicit in our account of Greek thought, but Varro makes the distinction explicit. There are, according to Varro, three different kinds of theology, mythical, physical and civil.¹⁹ Varro is critical of the mythical or 'fabulous' theology which is concerned with the crude myths related of the gods. Civil theology is concerned with official state ceremonies and parade services. Natural theology, for Varro, is speculative philosophy. The mythical is the sphere of the poet; the civil is the concern of the common man and natural theology is in the realm of the philosopher. Only two of Varro's four hundred and ninety books have survived and it is impossible to say whether or not he would have counted himself as a natural theologian. According to Augustine²⁰ Varro did not fully commit himself concerning the gods of natural theology though he was prepared to dismiss the gods of mythology as poetical and the gods of civil ceremonial as no more than useful institutions.

Natural theology, says Varro,

" is that wherewith the philosophers have filled their volumes: wherein they dispute what, whence and when the gods were, whether from eternity of fire, as Heraclitus

held, or of numbers as Pythagoras taught; or of atoms as Epicurus believed."²¹

Both Varro and Cicero sought encyclopedic knowledge of the universe and religion was one subject among many others that they sought to clarify. For this reason we must not look to Varro for conclusions concerning the nature of the gods; his work was much more that of analysis. His Christian commentators readily pointed out the inadequacy of his account of theology. In Ad Nationes Tertullian criticised all three types of theology as idolatrous. The poets' contribution is immoral; the civil gods provide only confusion, while the philosophers have ingeniously composed their 'physical theology' out of their own conjectures.²² Likewise Augustine criticised Varro for treating the gods as if they were the inventions of men.²³ It is unfortunate that we have to depend on his critics for an account of his work. He seems, however, to have been more concerned to apply critical analysis to religious thought and to give an account of religious customs rather than to pronounce on the truth or falsehood of theological assertions. Montaigne described Varro as a 'notable divine'. Augustine said of him:

" Who was ever a more curious inquisitor of these matters than Varro, a more learned inventor, a more diligent judge, a more elegant divider, or a more exact recorder ? "²⁴

If natural theology consists in asking pertinent questions about religion and applying standards of reason to assertions about divine matters then Varro has the right to be called a natural theologian.

Cicero was content to let his De Natura Deorum take the form of a shop window where alternative views of religion are displayed and the reader is left to decide which is most reasonable. Cicero takes it for granted that any religious belief must be subjected to the careful scrutiny of reason. In his dedication of the work to Brutus, he says,

" What is so unworthy of the dignity and seriousness proper to a philosopher as to hold an opinion that is not true, or to maintain with unhesitating certainty a proposition not based on adequate examination, comprehension and knowledge."²⁵

Herein lies the justification of an impartial examination of religious tenets. It is not sufficient to accept uncritically the convictions of Pythagoras or any other philosopher. In any case diversity of opinions must induce doubt.²⁶ In the course of the dialogue, which consists of lengthy speeches by Velleius, the Epicurean, Balbus, the Stoic and Cotta, the Academic, many of the traditional arguments for the existence of God are produced and in turn criticised. The Epicurean justification for belief in God lies in the fact that "it is the constant and universal opinion of mankind, irrespective of education, custom and law".²⁷ This, of course, was the justification for natural theology at the beginning of the Christian era. All men everywhere have a conception of God. Not all men have received the revelation through Judaism and Christianity. Therefore there must be a knowledge of God available quite apart from revelation. Cotta questions the assumption of the universality of theistic belief. He points out that it is impossible to know whether the belief is

universal or not and points to individual philosophers who are at least agnostic.²⁸ In passing Cotta makes a comment that has some bearing on our consideration of natural theology as critic of religion.

" I always find it much harder to think of arguments to prove a thing true than to prove it false."²⁹

The negative task of natural theology is always much easier than any constructive function.

In the second book Balbus sets out a number of arguments for the existence of the gods including a form of the teleological argument. He also appeals to the consensus gentium as well as to evidence of divination and records of epiphanies, but his chief appeal is to the design found in the universe. In his careful description of the human digestive system³⁰ and accounts of curiosities of the animal world Balbus anticipates much that Paley and the authors of the Bridgewater Treatises were to write. Such intricate design could only be the work of a divine mind. Cotta, the high Priest, comes back to the attack, pointing out the moral imperfections of the deities of the Roman pantheon, and the inconsistencies of the various providences and revelations. Cicero himself seems to have considered that a purified popular religion would be advantageous to the community though it is by no means certain which, if any, of the participants in the dialogue represents his own views. He is at least urging that religion, and in particular the popular beliefs of religion, should be subjected to a rigorous examination by reason. He

makes Cotta, who has acknowledged earlier that he depends on religion for a living, conclude with the remark,

" This is the purport of what I had to say concerning the nature of the gods, not with a design to destroy their existence, but merely to show what an obscure point it is, and with what difficulties an explanation of it is attended. "31

The closing sentence of the work suggests that while Cotta, the critic, had the strongest arguments supporting a critical scepticism, Cicero himself accepted the arguments of Balbus on the basis of probability.

Both Varro and Cicero were eclectics rather than original thinkers. They were critics of religion and theology rather than theologians or metaphysicians. They were the last great pre-Christian writers who dealt with religious practices and beliefs. Not unnaturally they were regarded by the early Christian thinkers as summing up what the ancient world had been able to learn of God without the benefit of revelation. Both were critics of the ancient religions, ready to reject crude superstition, but prepared to salvage from the welter of early theologies those concepts which might provide the foundation of a religion that men of their time might accept with integrity. They were not engaged in metaphysics; they had no apologetic brief; they were bringing the light of reason to bear on the claims of religion.

6. Towards Christian Self-Criticism

In the early centuries of the Christian era reason became an instrument in the hands of the apologists. No-one believed that the fullness of the Christian message could be conveyed by simple reasoning. Nevertheless reason was a useful weapon with which to attack pagan conceptions of deity. The kind of arguments used by Xenophanes were used by the Christians against current pagan anthropomorphism. The theologians would use reason within the realm of faith to construct formularies, but a considerable time elapsed before reason is turned on the Christian faith itself in self-criticism. In an age which tended to exalt the authority of the Fathers above reason the challenge of Peter Abelard provided a necessary antidote.

Clement Webb reminds us³² that Varro's use of the word 'theology' had led to its association with heathenism. Abelard was bold enough to call one of his own works Introductio ad Theologiam. While we must not dismiss the writings of Abelard as purely negative, such positive contribution as he makes is largely the outcome of his critical rational approach to the teaching of the church. Abelard does not appear to have used the motto, Intelligo ut credam, which is sometimes attributed to him. He does not say that we must understand completely before we can believe. He is rather protesting against unintelligent belief and insisting that we cannot be said to believe something that has no meaning for us. In his Sic et Non he set conflicting

passages from the Fathers one against another leaving the reader to draw the obvious conclusion that two contradictory statements cannot both be true. This method was to be adopted by later thinkers and in particular by St. Thomas who was not content to leave the thesis and the objections side by side but went on to provide a constructive solution. Abelard saw that Christians have a duty to be "honest to God" but he did not see as clearly as Aquinas the limitations of human reason. In spite of his condemnation by the authorities later thinkers followed the lead given by Abelard. Gilson comments on his momentous influence :

" The end of the twelfth century is indebted to him for an ideal of technical strictness and exhaustive justification, even in theology, which was to find its complete expression in the doctrinal syntheses of the thirteenth century. Abelard imposed, so to speak, an intellectual standard which no one thenceforth cared to lower."³³

If Abelard is to be labelled a rationalist it is only in contrast to those who refused to subject the various authorities to the examination of reason. In his Introductio ad Theologiam Abelard declared :

" Now therefore it remains for us, after having laid down the foundation of authority, to place upon it the buttresses of reasoning."³⁴

He regarded the truths of the faith as propositions to be logically and grammatically analysed. Thus : -

" This is the first key to wisdom, careful and frequent questioning For by doubting we come to questioning, and by questioning we perceive the truth."³⁵

Theology, for Abelard, who made no distinction between natural theology and any other, was the examination of religious truths in the light of reason. In this he was the precursor of later rationalists who were no longer inhibited by the authority of the mediaeval church.

7. Towards Reasonable Religion

Abelard had challenged the authoritarian formulations of faith from within the church. He did not dispute the necessity of revelation and faith. Once the external authority of the historic church was denied not only were the authoritarian formulations challenged but the status of faith itself was questioned. Where earlier thinkers had been asking how reason could confirm the established faith, philosophers now turned their attention to the reconciling of faith with reason. Indeed if a reasonable religion could be established there would no longer be any necessity for faith. Credulity was shown to have masqueraded as faith so often that faith itself was in danger of being discredited completely. It was thought, rather naively, that just as maps were drawn on the basis of common agreement among explorers, so it might be possible to review the religious beliefs of various peoples and to arrive at an agreed theological "map".

Lord Herbert, the first English student of comparative religion, surveyed the various religions in his day in De Religione Gentilium. In this case the impartial criticism of religion led to a positive expression of a reasonable "faith". Herbert began with certain logical assumptions, the chief of which was that there are certain Common Notions known to all sane men on the basis of natural instinct. If it can be shown that the idea of God is such a common notion this will be sufficient to establish the fact of God's existence. Lord Herbert claimed, somewhat unhistorically, that the pure rational conception of God was primary and its original purity had been corrupted by "the covetous and crafty sacerdotal order". This original catholic faith is embodied in his five assertions :

- (1) There is a Supreme God.
- (2) The Sovereign Deity ought to be worshipped.
- (3) The connection of virtue and piety .. is.. the most important part of religious practice.
- (4) The minds of men have always been filled with horror for their wickedness. Their vices and crimes have been obvious to them. They must be expiated by repentance.
- (5) There is reward and punishment after this life. ¹³⁶

Lord Herbert allowed for revelation but the most stringent tests were to be applied before a 'revelation' could be acknowledged as genuine. In no case would a revelation contradict the common notions and it would be essentially personal. The record

of revelation is not itself revelation and, owing to the unreliability of reporters, can never yield more than probability. Further, Lord Herbert found it difficult to see why God should entrust to one particular man truths that would be better imparted to all men by a natural instinct.³⁷ Thus from a critical approach to actual religions Lord Herbert moved on to constructive natural theology.

John Locke was as anxious as Lord Herbert to establish a reasonable religion and, as we have seen³⁸, he was careful to define both the limits of reason and the limits of revelation. Reason is the final arbiter. Locke declares,

" God, when he maketh the prophet, does not unmake the man. He leaves all his faculties in the natural state, to enable him to judge of his inspirations, whether they be of divine origin or no."³⁹

Theology, for Locke, is a natural science and he does not find it necessary to use the epithet 'natural'. What is more the study of this science is laid as a duty upon all men. The one day in seven apart from other days of rest allows time for this study.⁴⁰ Locke does not appeal to the consensus gentium nor does he put any confidence in the ontological argument. Man knows that he himself exists, argues Locke, and since a being cannot be produced from nothing, something eternal exists which is most powerful and most knowing. This being must be God. This natural theology of Locke's is the direct outcome of the critical study of religion. Locke, like Herbert, allows that there may be revelation, but it is carefully circumscribed.

The natural theology of Herbert and Locke prepared the way for Deism. In 1696 John Toland published his Christianity not mysterious, showing that there is nothing in the Gospel contrary to Reason nor above it, and that no Christian Doctrine can properly be called a Mystery. Anthony Collins published his Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of Christian Religion in 1724. In this he challenged the traditional arguments for the truth of Christianity based on miracle and prophecy fulfilment. Six years later came Matthew Tindal's Christianity as old as the Creation, or, a Republication of the Religion of Nature. Reason had finally triumphed over revelation. From being the critic of religion reason had become its creator.

8. David Hume : Scepticism and Faith

Hume, as we have seen, was careful to distinguish between any reasonableness that may appertain to religious concepts and reasonableness as the original ground of their acceptance. Men are not religious on the grounds of reason. They embrace religion first and then their religious concepts have to be tested by reason. Yet because religion's hold upon a man is so strong man's reason may be enslaved by the grossest superstitions. Man's ignorance of scientific explanations may lead him, as Hippocrates had observed, to ascribe unusual events to the intervention of the deity. Where the rational man sees such unusual events as evidence of the lack of a supreme organising intelligence, the superstitious man sees them as a sign of "the

immediate operation of providence".⁴¹ Hume complains that when a man raises doubts about religion he is immediately condemned as sinful or presumptuous. This is especially so, he says, where theism is the fundamental tenet of a popular religion and where authority is vested in a sacred book like the Alcoran or in a visible authority like the Roman pontiff.⁴² Hume allows that theologians do not go so far as to say that human reasoning is totally unreliable and that deity is utterly incomprehensible. The teaching of the authorities possesses some degree of consistence and uniformity and so the believers are swept along to accept the mysteries as well as the reasonable assertions of faith. What irks Hume most is that such acceptance is regarded as a virtue and the questioning of such mysteries a deadly sin.

Where Herbert's study of natural religions led him to discover general unanimity in the common notions, Hume's study uncovered all the inconsistencies. He could find no abiding place for reason in the temples of religion. So at the close of his Natural History of Religion he proposed to escape from the fury and contentions of opposing superstitions into the calm, though obscure, regions of philosophy.

Hume makes a more philosophical approach to the problems of religion in The Dialogues concerning Natural Religion. The argument, according to Demea, is not concerned with the being of God but his nature, yet as the dialogue continues we find that the discussion of the nature of God inevitably raises the

question of his existence. At one point Cleanthes and Philo vie with each other in painting a gloomy picture of the cruel universe and Philo points out that Epicurus's old questions concerning God are still unanswered.

" Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able ? then is he impotent. Is he able, but not willing ? then is he malevolent. Is he both able and willing ? whence then is evil ?"⁴³

It is impossible, Philo urges, for us to infer the goodness of God from an evil world. Hume developed this thought in the Inquiry concerning the Human Understanding.⁴⁴

" It is impossible," Hume claims, " for you to know any thing of the cause, but what you have antecedently not inferred, but discovered to the full in the effect."⁴⁵

If we are arguing from effect to cause, the cause we deduce must be proportioned to the effect. So unless we have a perfect world we cannot argue to a perfect creator. Philosophers only arrive at such a conclusion because "they have aided the ascent of reason by the wings of the imagination".⁴⁶ In inferring a perfect creator, the philosopher is assigning attributes to the cause beyond what appears in the effect.

In the light of Kant's subsequent conclusions concerning the limitations of natural theology it should be noted that Hume had already come to similar conclusions concerning any argument from design. Hume had already abolished knowledge to leave room for faith.

" There is no view of human life, or of the condition

of mankind, from which, without the greatest violence, we can infer the moral attributes, or learn that infinite benevolence, conjoined with infinite power and infinite wisdom, which we must discover by the eyes of faith alone."⁴⁷

The most we can arrive at by inference is

" That the cause or causes of order in the universe probably bear some remote analogy to human intelligence."⁴⁸

Kant concluded that if a man could have knowledge of God's existence from other sources, then the argument from design might strengthen the belief, but Hume argued, in the person of Philo, that if a man were assured antecedently that there was a good God who had created a universe, he would never have inferred from that assurance that this was the kind of world he would create. Philo continues,

" But supposing, which is the real case with regard to man, that this creature is not antecedently convinced of a supreme intelligence, benevolent and powerful, but is left to gather such a belief from the appearance of things; this entirely alters the case, nor will he ever find reason for such a conclusion. He may be fully convinced of the narrow limits of his understanding; but this will not help him in forming an inference concerning the goodness of superior powers, since he must form that inference from what he knows, not from what he is ignorant of."⁴⁹

So Hume concluded that just as religion was not originally a product of reason, so in a later age reason could not prove the truths of religion. Equally, reason could not disprove those truths, and so he left the way open for revelation and

faith. Hume saw all the logical weaknesses of Deism and, whatever his own convictions were, recognised it as a caricature of the Christian faith, summing up the position in the celebrated words of Philo.

" A person, seasoned with a just sense of the imperfections of natural reason, will fly to revealed truth with the greatest avidity: while the haughty Dogmatist, persuaded that he can erect a complete system of Theology, by the mere help of philosophy, disdains any further aid, and rejects this adventitious instructor. To be a philosophical Sceptic is, in a man of letters, the first and most essential step towards being a sound, believing Christian."⁵⁰

This is a very different conclusion from that of Locke and the deists. In his efforts to be honest to God Hume shook the very foundations of natural theology. Never again would naive acceptance of the traditional theistic arguments be possible. If natural theologians revived the arguments with undiminished confidence it was because they had either not read or not understood Hume. In his own century Hume received scant attention from the theologians. The most important immediate effect was the awakening of Kant from his dogmatic slumbers. His lessons have been forcefully repeated by positivist philosophers of our own day. Hume himself would scarcely wish to be called a natural theologian but he has done much to clarify the possibilities of natural theology. Indeed, if natural theology is an attempt to think clearly about God then Hume's work is natural theology.

One of his recent editors comments,

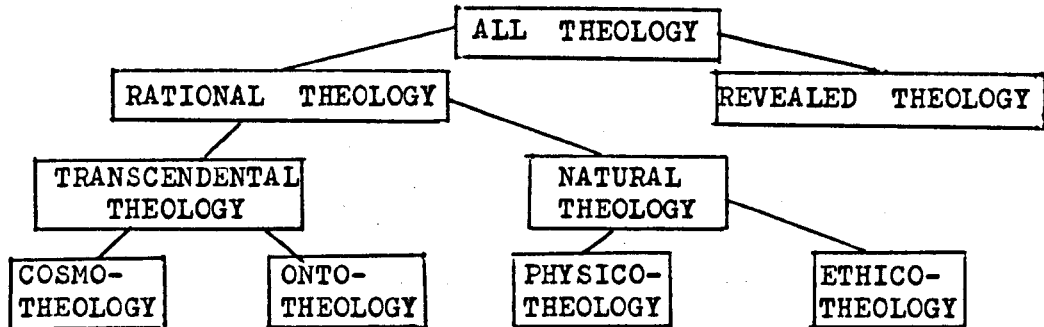
" Whether to our salvation or damnation we will have to go on doing theology. And, ironic as it may seem, Hume will help us to do it better than we should have done it without him."⁵¹

9. Kant : Towards a reasoned faith

After the onslaught of Hume Natural Theology was indeed the sick man of Europe, for if Hume was right there was little or nothing left to be done. Kant, awakened by Hume, began again from the beginning. He believed that all knowledge and experience should be subjected to the careful scrutiny of reason and he did not exempt theology from this judgment. In the Preface to the First Edition of the Critique of Pure Reason, he wrote,

" Ours is an age of criticism, to which everything must be subjected. The sacredness of religion and the authority of legislation, are by many regarded as grounds of exemption from the examination of this tribunal. But, if they are exempted, they become the subjects of just suspicion, and cannot lay claim to sincere respect, which reason accords only to that which has stood the test of a free and public examination."⁵²

In the chapter of the Critique entitled, "Critique of all Theology based upon Speculative Principles of Reason",⁵³ he analysed the possible approaches to theology and devised a scheme which is most clearly represented diagrammatically:



Theology is the cognition of a primal being either on the grounds of reason (Theologia Rationalis) or revelation (Theologia Revelationis). Transcendental Theology produces knowledge of God by means of consideration of pure transcendental conceptions such as ens originarium, realissimum or ens entium. If these conceptions are examined without the aid of experience then the study is called Onto-theology. The ontological argument would be an example of this approach. If reference is made to what Kant calls "general experience" without any closer reference to the world to which the experience belongs then we have cosmo-theology. The cosmological argument, drawing as it does upon the general experience of cause and effect is thus cosmo-theology. Nothing more than Deism can be deduced from Transcendental Theology. If, however, we draw on our experience, intellectual, moral and physical, then we are in the realm of Natural Theology, through which we can find our way to Theism. Kant distinguishes Deism and Theism by saying that the former regards the Supreme Being as the cause of the world while the latter sees God as the author of the world. The Deist believes in God; the Theist in a living God. When we take our experience of the physical world

into account we may produce an argument from design which Kant describes as physico-theological. When ^{we} take our moral experience into account we have the ethico-theological argument, which, from Kant's point of view, was the only satisfactory approach.

We are not concerned here with Kant's attempt to build up a positive argument, but it is important to keep his total scheme clearly before us, so that we can have full appreciation of the edifice he is demolishing by his Critique. One by one he demolished the arguments, leaving the ethico-theological argument as the one feasible "proof". It must be made clear, however, that Kant's dismissal of the rational arguments does not mean that he has no further use for natural theology. He is prepared to admit that if we can get knowledge of God from some other source, and revelation and ethico-theology are possible sources, then the other arguments add weight. Of the arguments he rejected the physico-theological seemed to him the strongest and he wrote,

" The physico-theological proof may add weight to others - if other proofs there are - by connecting speculation with experience; but in itself it rather prepares the mind for theological cognition, and give it a right and natural direction, than establishes a sure foundation for theology."⁵⁴

From the point of view of our discussion what he goes on to say is even more relevant. Irrespective of the ability or disability of reason to establish, theism reason will always have the task of critic. Thus :-

" Although pure speculative reason is far from sufficient to demonstrate the existence of a Supreme Being, it is of

the highest utility in correcting our conception of this being - on the supposition that we can attain to the cognition of it by some other means - in making it consistent with itself and with all other conceptions of intelligible objects, clearing it from all that is incompatible with the conception of an ens summum, and eliminating from it all limitations or admixture of empirical elements."⁵⁵

Kant is still prepared to call this exercise Transcendental Theology. Notwithstanding its objective inadequacy it is important in this negative application. In particular it will serve to correct contradictions arising from anthropomorphism in its many aspects. It may not provide proof but it will serve to clarify the metaphysical concept of God.

" The attributes of necessity, infinitude, unity, existence apart from the world (and not as a world-soul), eternity - free from conditions of time, omnipresence - free from conditions of space, omnipotence, and others, are pure transcendental predicates; and thus the accurate conception of a Supreme Being, which every theology requires, is furnished by transcendental theology alone."⁵⁶

This point made by Kant is of no small import even to so called Dogmatic or Biblical theology. The very conceptions enumerated are not to be found in those terms in Biblical literature. They may be drawn by inference from the scriptures but they remain metaphysical concepts, the product of pure reasoning rather than inference from religious experience.

Kant's critique of theology served to show the inadequacy of transcendental and natural theology in providing serviceable

proofs. Even the moral argument is not so much a proof as an expression of faith. Kant's critique opens the way for faith, which was its expressed intention. "I must, therefore, abolish knowledge to make room for belief," he wrote in the preface to the second edition. It also serves to demonstrate that the findings of faith must be checked and corrected by reason. Kant, as we have seen, had no hesitation in describing this exercise as transcendental theology. Since the term natural theology is used at times by Kant to embrace transcendental theology as well as what is called natural theology in his analysis, we shall at least have Kant's authority for claiming that when reason acts as critic of religious concepts it is indeed natural theology, even if it be admitted that reason by itself is unable to produce anything like a theology. Indeed the possibility must remain that such critical examination will result in atheism or agnosticism.

In so far as Kant was successful in abolishing knowledge to make room for belief, he prepared the way for two further developments. On the one hand there was a renewed emphasis on faith and religious experience and on the other the philosophers turned to Idealism to find a philosophy within which a religious faith might find expression. These developments are discussed in later chapters. We need not pursue further the idea of natural theology as critic of religion. There were later philosophers who took the same view, but Kant had made the point as clearly as it could be made.

10. Gifford Lecturers as Critics of Religion

We now turn to an examination of some definitions or descriptions of natural theology offered by Gifford lecturers, which involve the critical assessment of truth as a part if not the whole function of natural theology.

We have already noted that H.J.Paton described his task as a Gifford lecturer as thinking dispassionately about religion. William Wallace spoke of construing rather than constructing religion. William Temple stated categorically :

" Natural Theology should be the criticism of actual Religion and of actual religious beliefs, irrespective of their supposed origin and therefore independently of any supposed act or word of Divine Revelation, conducted with the full understanding of what is criticised, yet with the complete relentlessness of scientific enquiry."⁵⁷

Christopher Dawson described natural theology as

" nothing more or less than the philosophic or scientific study of religious truth,"⁵⁸

while John Laird commented after a careful examination of the theistic arguments,

" Even if natural theology be insufficient of itself to prove much, it may appreciably clarify much in theology."⁵⁹

Sir Henry Jones summed up this approach in the title of his work, A Faith that Enquires. Natural theology questions faith. Through the centuries reason has helped to distinguish religion and superstition, faith and credulity. As Whitehead put it, "Reason safeguards the objectivity of religion."⁶⁰

Even if revelation is accepted as of the essence of religious faith there is still a place for such rational enquiry, or so a number of lecturers have thought. Leonard Hodgson, a theologian rather than a philosopher maintained that,

" The fullest recognition of the revealed character of the Christian faith is consistent with the belief that it is God's will to submit it to the judgment of human reason."⁶¹

If the emphasis is put upon religious experience there is the same necessity for rational criticism. C.A.Campbell believes that religious experience, interpreted symbolically, provides prima facie evidence for the truth of religion, but this evidence must be sifted by reason.

" Natural Theology seeks a rational answer to the question, 'Is religion true ? And if so, in what precise sense ?'"⁶²

Some two thousand years earlier Cicero had written,

" In an inquiry as to the nature of the gods, the first question that we ask is, do the gods exist or not ? "⁶³

Natural theology then, and there is considerable support for this view among Gifford lecturers, checks, criticises and judges the truth of religious statements by the light of reason. This is in accord with Lord Gifford's expressed desire that lecturers should discuss the origin, nature and truth of man's conceptions of God without dependence upon special revelation. It is one of the functions of a Gifford lecturer to think dispassionately about religion.

Part 2.Chapter 1.Reference Notes

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- 3 G. 51. pp.38ff
- 4 G. 51. p.40
- 5 Xenophanes, Fragments, B11,B12, quoted by Jaeger in G.51.p.47
- 6 ,, ,, B23 ,, ,, ,, p.42
- 7 ,, ,, B15 ,, ,, ,, p.47
- 8 ,, ,, B16 ,, ,, ,, p.47
- 9 See G.1. pp. 201-9
- 10 See G.1. pp. 212-240 Adam devotes two lectures to the philosophy of Heraclitus.
- 11 G.1. p.3.
- 12 Diogenes Laertes, viii. 21, quoted by Adam in G.1. pp.4-5
- 13 Cf. Henry Drummond in The Ascent of Man, 1894, :
" There are reverent minds who ceaselessly scan the fields of nature and the books of science in search of gaps - gaps which they fill up with God. As if God lived in gaps."
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Chapter Two

Natural Theology as Apologetic

1	The Need for Apologetic	page 234
2	St. Paul, Apologist and Natural Theologian	235
3	The Early Apologists	239
4	The Western Apologists	245
5	From Apologetic to Christian Philosophy	247
6	St. Thomas, Apologist and Christian Philosopher	250
7	Theologia Naturalis sive Liber Creaturarum	252
8	Modern Philosophy and Apologetic	255
9	Science and Apologetic	259
10	Apologetic after Darwin	265
11	Gifford Lecturers as Apologists	268
	Reference Notes	273

1. The Need for Apologetic

To the Hebrew mind the 'Thus saith the Lord', proclaimed in the deserts or from the hilltops, was sufficient argument for the existence of God. The Hebrew prophets had a natural theology but they did not use it to argue the case so much as to declare the nature of God. Likewise the Christian gospel is kerygma - a declaration rather than an argument.

Among the Greeks religious observances might take place at local shrines but the truths of religion were subjects for discussion among the cultured classes. While the Christian message was being proclaimed to Jews the argument of fulfilment of prophecy might prove effective. They were more accustomed to the type of argument presented by Elijah - the argument from God's activity in the world. "The God who answers by fire, he is God," declared Elijah. St. Paul made an accurate diagnosis of the situation when he said, "Jews call for miracles, Greeks look for wisdom".¹ If a new gospel was to be presented to the Greek world, the arguments addressed to the Jews would be relatively useless; the case must be argued. The problem that faced the early church was that of preaching a faith to a world in which the Hebrew scriptures meant nothing. The problem facing the twentieth century church is that of preaching a faith to a world which knows little of the scriptures and often misunderstands the little that is known.

If a case is to be argued there must be some common ground on which the argument can be founded. Argument with the Jews,

as we observed, would begin with the interpretation of the Hebrew scriptures. Argument with the Greeks would begin on such common ground as could be found - belief in supernatural powers or power. Argument with the twentieth century unbeliever may well begin on the common ground of a search for meaning. But if conversion is to take place and if it is to be more than a non-rational acceptance of a dogmatic proposition, then there must be some kind of reasoned argument. The final step may be a leap of faith but before a rational man will be prepared to make such a leap it will be necessary to persuade/^{him}either that his present position is untenable or that the new position commended is as reasonable or more reasonable. So at times apologetic may be directed against another religion, and at other times it will involve demonstrating the reasonableness of the faith commended.

2. St. Paul, Apologist and Natural Theologian

The common ground that St. Paul found in his approach to the Greeks was belief in God. It is not clear whether this knowledge of God, which Paul assumes to be available to the Greeks, is to be understood as an inference from the world of nature or an intuition arising from man's perception of God's revelation of himself. The distinction was unimportant in the first century, but in the light of subsequent theological discussion we shall need to examine more closely the nature of this knowledge of God recognised by Paul.

The account of the visit of Paul and Barnabas to Lystra and the report of Paul's speech before the Court of the Areopagus provide the earliest documentary evidence of the use of natural theology for apologetic purposes. When Paul and Barnabas had been hailed as Hermes and Zeus they declared :

" Men, why are you doing this? We also are men, of like nature with you, and bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways; yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness."²

The emphasis on the living God who did not leave himself without witness suggests that, in the view of the apostles, God was actively revealing himself in nature to those who could see, rather than waiting passively to be discovered by man's intellectual ability. This is not to say that there is no intellectual element in an intuition of God, but that the kind of insight or intuition involved is more than an intellectual apprehension based on a teleological or cosmological argument. It is, as we shall see, more analogous to a person gaining an insight into the character of another person than to an explorer discovering the source of a river. This is confirmed by Paul's speech at Athens where he declared :

" He made from one every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should

seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find him. Yet he is not far from each one of us, for

'In him we live and move and are;'

as even some of your poets have said,

'For we are indeed his offspring.'

Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the Deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, a representation by the art and imagination of man."³

The ground on which the Athenians should know that the Deity is not like gold or silver or stone is that 'we are indeed his offspring', a ~~maxim~~ maxim from the Greek poet, Aratas, who had somehow been able to express a thought that tallied with Jewish teaching. When we come upon the description of man as "seeking God" or "feeling after him" we are in the realm of insight, intuition or faith rather than intellectual search.

There is further confirmation in the letter to the Romans that Paul recognised that the gentiles had a natural theology of their own upon which the Christian faith could be built. Some scholars hold the view that, after the relative failure of the Athens speech, Paul resolved to preach only Christ and him crucified. Nevertheless some, including Dionysius and Damaris, had become believers and in the letter to the Romans Paul reaffirms his belief that this general knowledge of God is open to all men. And if it exists it could still be the basis of apologetic. Paul wrote,

" For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his

eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse; for although they knew God they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles."⁴

Here it is clear that this knowledge of God depends primarily on God's revelation of himself in creation. It depends secondarily upon man's willingness to see what should be plain to him. Commenting on the passage, Etienne Gilson declares,

" He (Paul) affirms by implication the possibility of a purely rational knowledge of God in the Greeks, and at the same time lays the foundation of all the natural theologies which will later arise in the bosom of Christianity. No philosopher, from St. Augustine to Descartes, but will make use of this text."⁵

The question we must raise is whether Paul is in fact talking about a purely rational knowledge of God in the Greeks. It is not purely rational in the sense that the answer to a mathematical problem is arrived at by a purely rational process. It can be argued that man could arrive at this knowledge of God by a purely rational process if he were not a fallen creature, but since we have no means of knowing how such a creature reasons it is a purely hypothetical question. Paul was quite certain that philosophy is no substitute for faith and that the Christian gospel is the true wisdom of God. He also believed that there is a knowledge of God available to any man who looks at the

natural world in the appropriate way. We must repeat, however, that this knowledge is not an inference from data which can be logically verified; it is more appropriately described as insight.

So at the beginning of the Christian era Paul propounded a two-fold theory of truth. There is a revelation of the existence of God which can be apprehended by what we have called insight and there is a revelation in Christ offered by grace and apprehended by faith. The first kind of knowledge is the basis of apologetic; the second kind of knowledge is the subject matter of preaching. So Paul not only laid the foundation of one kind of natural theology, but, in the words of Pfleiderer,

" This man of ecstasies and vision was at the same time a religious thinker of the first rank. What he felt he continually made the object of his reflection, in order to comprehend it in thought and prove it to himself and others as truth. Thus he became the creator of the doctrinal form of the Christian faith, a comprehensive new view of the world, the creator of Christian theology."⁶

So Christian theology was born and natural theology adopted as a close ally.

3. The Early Apologists

Where Paul appealed to an insight, within which the teleological argument is a built-in component, later apologists abstracted the rational element and appealed explicitly to rational arguments. Paul's natural theology was based on something God had revealed to the gentiles; later apologists appealed directly to reason as being the instrument given by God to

enable man to find things out for himself.

In the second century Aristides, an Athenian philosopher, wrote an apology dedicated to the Emperor. His starting point, as Pfleiderer points out⁷ is philosophical rather than religious. Elementary forms of the teleological and cosmological arguments are used to demonstrate the existence of God, who is described in philosophical terms as

" unbegotten, uncreated, an eternal nature, without beginning or end, immortal, perfect and inconceivable; perfect because being without wants, having need of nothing, while everything has need of him."⁸

So much is clear to all men, but the pagans have erred in their expression of religious truth; the Jews have come a little nearer to the truth, but to the Christians the fulness of the truth has been revealed. Here we see the beginning of the conflation of Christian theology and Greek speculative thought about God.

Justin Martyr, another second century apologist, if his own account of his spiritual quest is true, was actively seeking God through philosophy. In the Dialogue with Trypho, he gives what might well be a dramatised account of his interviews with a Stoic, a Peripatetic, a Pythagorean and a Platonist in the course of his search for God. The last named gave him the most definite help but finally Justin met an aged man who told him of God's revelation of himself to the prophets.

" Their writings are still extant, and he who has read them is very much helped in his knowledge of the beginning and the end of things, and of those matters which the

philosopher ought to know, provided he has believed them. For they did not use demonstration in their treatises, seeing they were witnesses to the truth above all demonstration, and worthy of belief."⁹

Thus philosophy was successful in leading him part of the way to God, and in the Christian faith he saw a new kind of philosophy which would enable him to fulfil his quest. Justin continues,

" I found this philosophy alone to be safe and profitable. Thus, and for this reason, I am a philosopher."¹⁰

Commenting on the manner of Justin's conversion, Gilson writes,

" A man seeks the truth by the unaided effort of reason and is disappointed; it is offered him by faith and he accepts; and, having accepted, he finds that it satisfies his reason. . . . Disordered reason is reduced to order by revelation; but precisely because they had experimented in every direction without being afraid of contradictions, the philosophers had managed to say, along with much that was false, a good deal also that was true."¹¹

Christianity was, for Justin, a new philosophy that gave satisfying answers to which the old philosophies had only been able to give partial answers. It is interesting to note that after his acceptance of Christianity he calls himself a philosopher. As a Christian philosopher he could now expound his Christianity against the background of the Greek philosophies. One who was conversant with and indeed owed much to Greek philosophy could commend the Christian faith to the gentiles more readily. He recognised that God had spoken in Greek philosophy. John Watson comments,

" Justin is the first writer to maintain that God had not confined the revelation of himself to the Jewish people, but

had revealed himself to the heathen world, not only in the world of creation, but through his Son, who is the divine reason in every man."¹²

Christianity is thus not the contradiction of pagan philosophy but the highest expression of divine reason open to all men.

Not all the early apologists shared Justin's liberal view. According to Tatian (c.160), a pupil of Justin's, who is described by Gilson as "the arch-enemy of Greek philosophy",¹³ all that was true in Greek thought had been borrowed from Jewish sources. Athenagoras was prepared to recognise truth in the Greek philosophers but mainly to demonstrate to the authorities that the monotheism of the Christians was implicit in Greek philosophy and did not constitute a threat to the empire. The chief contribution of Athenagoras to natural theology lies in his attempt to justify by rational argument the Christian belief in the resurrection of the dead.¹⁴ The increasing influence of Gnosticism led to the production of a number of works directed to the heretics rather than the gentiles. Where the Gnostics based their religion on gnosis available to reason, Irenaeus (c.130-200) claimed that Christianity was a gnosis attainable through faith. The true gnosis is the teaching of the twelve apostles.¹⁵ Hippolytus (c.170-236), asserted by one authority to be a disciple of Irenaeus, seems to have been interested in Greek philosophy simply to show the superiority of the Christian 'philosophy'.

A position, similar to that of Justin, was adopted by Clement of Alexandria (c.150-215). In Clement's view both Judaism and Hellenism are precursors of Christianity. As in an earlier century Philo had been able to synthesise Old Testament revelation and Greek philosophy through the unity provided by the divine Logos, so for Clement Jewish prophecy and Greek philosophy find their completion in Christ. Clement writes,

" Before the advent of the Lord, philosophy was necessary to the Greeks for righteousness. And now it becomes conducive to piety; being a kind of preparatory training to those who attain faith through demonstration. . . . For God is the cause of all good things; but of some primarily, as of the Old and the New Testament; and of others by consequence, as philosophy. Perchance, too, philosophy was given to the Greeks directly and primarily, till the Lord should call the Greeks. For this was a schoolmaster to bring the Hellenic mind, as the law, the Hebrews, to Christ. Philosophy, therefore, was a preparation, paving the way for him who is perfected in Christ."¹⁶

This is the first clear expression of the view that philosophy is to be the handmaid of theology. Theology, however, is the undisputed mistress for though much is said in the early fathers in praise of philosophy the Hebrew revelation is recognised as infinitely superior and, as we have seen, some of the fathers claimed that Plato was indebted to Moses for his wisdom.

The Greeks had not been able to find the fullness of truth through philosophy just as the Jews had not been able to reach

the final goal through Judaism. Nevertheless if philosophy was a preparation for the Greeks then natural theology finds a ready made place in the pattern of Christian apologetic. At least philosophy provides the common ground on which the dialogue can begin. Some think that the object of the apologists was to strengthen the faith of believers¹⁷ but the fact that the works were frequently dedicated to high Roman officials suggests that a wider purpose was in view and that the strengthening of the faith of believers was incidental. Incidental it may have been but the fact that the Christian was confronting a world of many philosophies meant that he must devise his own philosophy in self defence. Philosophical theology came into being.

Origen (c.185-254), a pupil of Clement, has been described by one Gifford lecturer as "the first philosophical theologian of the Church".¹⁸ Pflleiderer is probably right¹⁹ in asserting that Origen only wished to use Greek philosophy for the defence and establishment of the Christian faith, but inevitably there came about that fusion of Christian faith and Greek speculation which marked the development of Christian theology. Taking a liberal view of the Old Testament, Origen was able to ward off the attacks of Greeks like Celsus, whose criticisms were directed against its moral and scientific anomalies. Similarly he attempted to show that the truths of the Bible are in accordance with truths which can be reached independently of

revelation.²⁰ The impact of Hellenistic ideas forced Origen to find a way of expressing the gospel in terms comprehensible to the gentiles and this in turn led to a rethinking of the Christian faith in Greek terminology. The terms used by Origen to describe God, "eternal", "immutable", "immaterial" and such like, are essentially Greek concepts. What began as apologetic became a philosophical theology.

4. The Western Apologists

Tertullian, in common with most of the early apologists²¹, held that belief in the existence of God is innate. He believed that the soul is naturally Christian as testified by his work, De Testimonio Animae Naturaliter Christianae. Christianity, indeed, is natural religion par excellence. Yet the soul did not learn Christianity through Greek philosophy; the soul turns to Christianity because it is created by God. Tertullian has no time for a "mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic and dialectic composition". His question, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem"²² has echoed down the ages. Far from attempting to show the reasonableness of Christianity, Tertullian recommends belief that the Son of God died "because it is absurd" and commends the resurrection faith "because it is impossible".²³ For Tertullian there is a natural theology which can be grasped by the mind but the peculiar beliefs of Christianity are beyond reason, and therefore cannot be commended as reasonable.

It is uncertain whether Minusius Felix (2nd or 3rd century) wrote before or after Tertullian. One of his works took the form of a dialogue between a pagan and a Christian after the pattern of Cicero's De Natura Deorum. The pagans had tried hard in their own way to discover truths which had been freely revealed to Christians. Thus if Cicero had discovered some truth about God and the world it was not unnatural that it should be confirmed by revelation. So Minusius was willing to use some of the Ciceronian arguments for the existence of God. However Christianity is for all and so, while reason may pave the way for the learned, to the babes the same truth may be revealed and they need not wait upon the wisdom of the learned. Aquinas was to develop this approach.

Arnobius (died c.330) set out to counter the attacks of the pagans who blamed Christianity for the many calamities that had befallen the world since its rise. An ardent admirer of Varro, Arnobius used similar methods in his criticism of pagan concepts of deity. In the main his arguments consist of replies to specific accusations and only in the second book of Adversus Gentes, where he claims that Christianity is confirmed by the agreements of pagan philosophy, does he employ something like natural theology. Jerome criticised Arnobius on the grounds of the absence of systematic exposition but the time when apologetic was to consist of a total philosophical exposition of Christian theology was yet to come with Augustine and supremely with Aquinas.

In his De Opificio Dei Lactantius (c.240-320), a pupil of Arnobius, developed the argument from design, which had been so clearly stated by Cicero and was to reach its most detailed interpretation in the early part of the nineteenth century. For some reason it would be "horrible and hideous" for the elephant's mouth to reach the ground. In any case the tusks prevent it and so the trunk was devised as an extra limb to reach food. God's masterpiece was man and Lactantius traces the design from the flat of the foot to the crowning glory of the hair. Man's perception and reason mark him off from the animals and in this lies the clear evidence that man is descended from God who himself is intelligence, perception and reason.²⁴ Like Arnobius, Lactantius is at pains to show that the Christian teaching about God is confirmed by the philosophers.²⁵ He was not immune from error and the "design" he envisaged had no place for a round earth which would involve rain falling upwards in the antipodes!²⁶ Nevertheless he saw clearly that reason and religion must go hand in hand and he helped to prepare the way for the mediaeval pattern of natural theology.

5. From Apologetic to Christian Philosophy

In The Confessions Augustine provides us with an autobiographical account which at once reveals the possibilities as well as the limitations of apologetic. Augustine was not consciously writing apologetic; he probably thought of his work simply as a testimony to the grace of God. Yet when a man tells how he moved from unbelief to belief and rational argument plays some

part in the process, then the result is attested apologetic, for in one case at least the argument worked! When the apologist is a believer at the outset, whether he be St. Thomas or Arch-deacon Paley, there is a certain artificiality about the argument. This was not the train of thought that led the writer to belief. But when a man like Augustine declares, "This and this led me to belief," then the unbeliever pays more attention.

The first aim of apologetic is to demonstrate that the faith commended is reasonable; this may be accompanied by an attempt to show that any alternative position is unreasonable. The next stage is to show that the view recommended is most reasonable. If deductive argument cannot lead the unbeliever all the way he may be invited to take the last step by faith even when one position has not been clearly shown to be more reasonable than another. At the end of the fifth book of The Confessions Augustine describes how, after listening to St. Ambrose he had reached a point of neutrality. He was convinced that the Catholic position was defensible and the position of the Manichees not as sound as he had thought.

"Nor yet conceived I that opinion to be false which formerly I had professed, because now I thought that both sides were equal. For although the Catholic cause seemed not to me to be overcome, as yet withal I took it not to be victorious."²⁷

For a time Augustine was neither a Manichee nor a Catholic. Gradually the Manichean arguments lost their strength and the Catholic position seemed more convincing, but he was still

looking for mathematical demonstration.

" For I kept my heart free from giving firm assent to anything. . . For I desired to be assured of that which I did not see, as fully as I was certain that seven and three make ten."²⁸

Finally he was intellectually convinced of the truth of the Catholic faith, but there remained the leap of faith which, for Augustine, meant moral submission.

" By the testimony of all Thy creatures I had found Thee, our Creator, and Thy Word, God together with Thee, and with Thee and the Holy Ghost one God, by Whom Thou didst create all things."²⁹

Reason was now satisfied but he had still not reached the goal.

The arguments that had satisfied his soul before were now confuted and destroyed and he tells us that there remained only a kind of "speechless trembling". Then there followed the conversion experience, and what he had accepted intellectually he now accepted with the whole of his being. He was advised by St. Ambrose to read the prophecy of Isaiah and since he would read the Latin translation of the Septuagint it would not be long before he came across the text, "Nisi credideritis, non intelligetis".³⁰ This provided the key to his spiritual pilgrimage. He had travelled a long way seeking intellectual satisfaction. He had taken the leap of faith and then it had all become plain to him. He had been mistakenly looking for mathematical certainty when what he needed was the assurance of faith. If this was the way to conversion then it would still

be necessary to demonstrate the reasonableness of the faith but even more was it necessary to declare the grace of God. So the apologetic offered by St. Augustine would be a systematic exposition of the Christian faith, what Gilson describes as "a metaphysic of conversion".

It is a short step from Augustine's experience to Anselm's fides quaerens intellectum. There is an apologetic element in Anselm's work, for he tells us that his ontological argument is "a short way with unbelievers", but he is a theologian rather than an apologist and we shall examine his "natural theology" at a later stage. From the time of Augustine apologetic was merging into Christian philosophy. It remained for St. Thomas to fulfil the triple role of philosopher-apologist and theologian.

6. St. Thomas, Apologist and Christian Philosopher

St. Thomas has been described as the apologist par excellence. He was also the Christian Philosopher par excellence. He saw that the most useful apologetic for his times would be a systematic exposition of the whole Christian theology. He determined, so he tells us³¹, not to adopt the traditional approach of proceeding against individual errors. The systematic exposition of the Catholic faith was to be his chief life work. Doctors of the church, like Augustine, had been able to enter into pagan thought from inside. While this insight had been denied to Aquinas he made a sincere effort to stand outside the realm of faith. Against the Jews he could have used the Old Testament; against

heretical Christians he used the New. Faced as he was with Mohammedans and pagans he could only find common ground in reason and this was the basis of his apologetic.

As a man of faith, St. Thomas was acutely aware of the limitations of reason. He respected the integrity of his opponents and at the outset acknowledged these limitations.³² For Aquinas the truths of reason are accessible through demonstrative argument; the truths of revelation are proposed to men for belief. Nevertheless these truths of revelation are not contrary to reason and they may be investigated by human reason providing there is "no presumption to comprehend or demonstrate".³³ It is possible to defend these truths by reason. Apologetic, for St. Thomas, thus consists in

- (a) demonstrating the truths of religion accessible to reason.
- (b) showing that the truths of revelation are not unreasonable and therefore they may properly be proposed for acceptance by faith, thus arguing from probability to faith.³⁴
- (c) expounding the Catholic faith in its totality and arguing from its coherence and self-consistency to its truth.

St. Thomas was prepared to use all the resources of the rediscovered Aristotelian philosophy for his purposes and much of the argument embodied in the Five Ways came directly from that source. It is interesting to note the precise limitations set for the exercise of natural reason. Reason can demonstrate

the existence of God. Further, by what Aquinas calls 'remotion' we may discover the negative attributes of God. God is eternal (i.e. not subject to time); there is no passive potency in God; there is no matter in God; there is no composition in God; there is nothing violent or unnatural in God; God is not a body.

The positive conclusion of this train of argument is that in God being and essence are the same. But these conclusions will not furnish a living faith. St. Thomas recognised that the confused knowledge of God which all men possess does not lead to the supreme happiness which is the end of man. In St. Thomas's system reason needs faith for its fulfilment and the strength of his position lies in his careful demarcation of the areas covered by reason and faith respectively. He did not fall into the errors of his predecessor Abelard or of the great rational apologist Raymond de Sebonde. John Watson described Aquinas's system as a "defence of the Mediaeval conception of life that is in its own way perfect".³⁵ The pattern of apologetic within the Catholic church was set by Aquinas for future centuries.

7. Theologia Naturalis sive Liber Creaturarum

As Clement Webb remarks,³⁶ Raymond de Sebonde's claim to a place in the history of natural theology depends on two accidents, that his work bore the title Theologia Naturalis, and that Montaigne translated the work in response to his father's request and made the defence of Raymond the subject of one of the most celebrated of his essays. Montaigne writes of him,

" His drift is bold, and his scope adventurous; for he undertaketh by human and natural reasons, to establish and verify all the articles of Christian religion against Atheists."³⁷

Raymond's own claim is more specific :

" This science is accessible alike to laymen and to clerks and to every condition of men and can be had in less than a month and without trouble, nor to possess it need one have learned anything by heart or keep any written book, nor can it be forgotten when once learned."³⁸

The book was first written with a prologue which caused offence to the Catholic Church and was placed on the Index in 1595. Some have claimed that the emphasis on the authority of Scripture as against the authority of the Church was the cause of offence, but from the quotations cited by Clement Webb it is clear that Raymond believed not only that his science confirmed scripture but also that by means of it "the whole Catholic faith is made known and proved to be true".³⁹ The book of nature, which is accessible to all men, is clearly put before the book of scripture which is not universally accessible. Since God is the common author of both the books, he argues, there can be no contradiction. The gravamen of the charge against Raymond is not so much that he puts scripture before tradition as that he dispenses with the necessity of both scripture and tradition. If Clement Webb's interpretation of the text is correct then Raymond claimed that anyone could gain the knowledge necessary for salvation by reading the book.⁴⁰ According to Montaigne,

Adrianus Turnus, "a man who knew all things", said that Raymond's work was "some quintessence extracted from out St. Thomas Aquinas". But in Theologia Naturalis there is nothing of Thomas's careful demarcation between faith and reason. Further, while the argument from design has a prominent place, which might support the statement, the ontological argument, dismissed so peremptorily by Aquinas, is reproduced and approved by Raymond. Clement Webb may be right in think^{ing} that Raymond is in no sense a fore-runner of the Reformation, but nevertheless his book anticipates future attempts at the creation of an apologetical natural theology, which were to assume that reason can go much further than ever St. Thomas and the mediaevals allowed.

Francis Bacon was wiser and less ambitious in setting limits to natural theology, which he fitted into his total scheme of scientific knowledge outlined in The Advancement of Learning. He wrote,

" And as concerning Divine Philosophy or Natural Theology, it is that knowledge or rudiment of knowledge concerning God, which may be obtained by the contemplation of his creatures; which knowledge may be truly termed divine in respect of the object, and natural in respect of the light. The bounds of this knowledge are, that it sufficeth to convince atheism, but not to inform religion."⁴¹

Thus Bacon seems to allow that natural theology can give a knowledge of God sufficient to confound the atheist but not sufficient to give a religious knowledge of God as opposed to factual knowledge.

8. Modern Philosophy and Apologetic

Descartes is usually regarded as the first of modern philosophers, but the Letter of Dedication and the Preface for the Reader which introduce The Meditations put him in the company of those who regard apologetic as the function of natural theology. The Letter of Dedication is addressed to the Dean and the Doctors of the Sacred Faculty of Theology of Paris, and in it Descartes declares his conviction that the two questions of God and the soul ought to be determined by the help of philosophy rather than theology. It had always seemed difficult, he claimed, if not impossible, to convert infidels unless these two questions were first settled by recourse to natural reason. Any argument from scripture for the existence of God he regarded as circular. For the benefit of the theological deans and doctors Descartes sought to justify natural theology from scripture, quoting the classical passages from the Book of Wisdom, chapter thirteen and the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans to show that "all that can be known of God may be manifest by reasons obtained from no other source than the inspection of our own minds." Descartes did not expect his arguments to be understood by the common man any more than he would expect the geometrical demonstrations of Archimedes to be universally comprehended. Nevertheless he believed his philosophy would be a powerful instrument against atheists and sought for it the approval of the Sorbonne. Philosophy for all its claims to independence was still to be the handmaid to theology.

In a sense Locke and the Deists were defending the truths of religion with reason as the only weapon. Bacon had seen the weakness of this defence in that reason is sufficient to convince atheism but not to inform religion. Reason is an insecure foundation for religion and the step from deism to atheism was an easy one. The specific intention of Bishop Berkeley's Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge was to examine the grounds of scepticism, atheism and irreligion. From his own Idealist viewpoint Berkeley argued that God is not only known with certainty equal to that with which we know the existence of other men but his existence is even more evident.⁴² Just as we can only know another man through sensations and the ideas of our own mind, so there can be no direct knowledge of God, but "the effects of nature are infinitely more numerous and considerable than those ascribed to human agents."⁴³ If we attentively consider the design and harmony of the universe we shall conclude that it is the work of the "one, eternal, infinitely wise, good and perfect Spirit".⁴⁴ The dialogues of Hylas and Philonous begin in a garden at a time of day and in a season of the year when

"that purple sky, those wild but sweet notes of birds, the fragrant bloom upon the trees and flowers, the gentle influence of the rising sun, these and a thousand nameless beauties of nature inspire the soul with secret transports".⁴⁵

In such words as these Philonous passes the time of day and crams the physico-theological argument into his morning greeting! Hylas is apparently bothered about the sceptics and atheists and invites

Philonous to share his concern. Philonous then expounds Berkeley's philosophy, denying the reality of matter, and asserting that God as eternal Mind must exist to sustain the universe we experience. Philonous declares,

" Men commonly believe, that all things are known or perceived by God, because they believe in the being of a God; whereas I, on the other side, immediately and necessarily conclude the being of God, because all sensible things must be perceived by Him."⁴⁶

Raymond de Sebonde claimed that he could deal adequately with the atheist in less than a month, but Philonous was able to settle the atheist in two morning walks, and the "wild imaginations" of Hobbes and Spinoza were overthrown by the single reflection that nothing exists without a mind. Part way through the second dialogue Philonous confidently declares,

" Setting aside all help of astronomy and natural philosophy . . . you may now, without any laborious search into the sciences, without any subtilty of reason, or tedious length of discourse, oppose and baffle the most strenuous advocates of Atheism."⁴⁷

Short ways with atheists are suspect and while one can readily believe that strenuous advocates of atheism have been baffled by Berkeley's arguments the list of atheists convinced by them must be extremely short.

For Bishop Butler credibility or reasonableness was a prima Facie reason for belief. In his introduction to the Analogy he expounded the doctrine of Probability. In difficult questions, Butler claimed, a man is justified in accepting the most

probable solution and if we can find a number of probable proofs the case is strengthened. "For probable proofs, by being added, not only increase the evidence, but multiply it."⁴⁸ This line of thought led later thinkers to describe the various theistic arguments as pointers, strengthening each other and leading to almost moral certainty. Butler was not initially concerned to prove the existence of God, but to refute the charge of irrationality levelled against the Christian faith. The Analogy is a sustained exposition of a text from Origen, so Butler tells us,

" He who believes the Scripture to have proceeded from Him Who is the Author of Nature, may well expect to find the same sort of difficulties in it, as are found in the constitution of Nature."⁴⁹

Butler was concerned to fill the gaps left by the Deists and to give Christian revelation its rightful place. Even so the morality and the evidence of revelation are to be subject to the judgement of reason.⁵⁰ Christianity, Butler believed, was a republication of natural religion. Another Bishop of Durham, Hensley Henson, lecturing at St. Andrews just two hundred years after the first publication of The Analogy, re-affirmed the view that only in Christianity does natural religion find its full expression, quoting his distinguished predecessor in the opening paragraphs of his own lectures.

" Christianity is a republication of natural Religion. It instructs mankind in the moral system of the world: that it is the work of an infinitely perfect Being, and under His government; that virtue is His law; and that

He will finally judge mankind in righteousness, and render to all according to their works, in a future state. And, which is very material, it teaches natural Religion in its genuine simplicity; free from those superstitions with which it was totally corrupted, and under which it was in a manner lost."⁵¹

Here we have an apologetic that is as arid in its own way as that of Bishop Berkeley, and we have the suspicion that John Wesley, who firmly believed that reason and religion should be joined, found a shorter way at any rate with some atheists than either of the eighteenth century bishops discovered.

The theistic arguments were to be subjected to searching criticism by Hume and Kant. Kant left the crumb of comfort that the physico-theological argument might add weight if there were other ways to religious truth through moral or religious experience. Similarly it was still possible to argue on Butler's principles from probability. So, as we shall see, physico-theological arguments, based on an ever increasing scientific knowledge of the world, survived Hume and Kant to meet the opposition of Darwin.

9. Science and Apologetic

From earliest times the evidence of design in nature has been adduced as evidence for the existence of God. The argument from design was used by pre-Christian thinkers. We have seen how Lactantius saw the providence of God in the design of the elephant. Even in the eighteenth century Christian Wolff maintained such a simple faith in the design of the Almighty

that he could still wonder at the sun, which enables us to put our clocks right and enables animals to find food by day that they could not find by night, indeed, "generally speaking, we should have no sundials if we had no sun."⁵²

The story of the changing relations between science and religion is told in Canon Raven's first series of lectures. While the authority of the church, and therefore of revelation, was unchallenged, science was seen as a study of how God's world works, but since God was also author of the scriptures which had prior authority, science must not contradict scripture. Francis Bacon, himself one of the harbingers of modern science, declared that religion and philosophy must not be "commixed together."⁵³ It was unsafe, he thought, to draw conclusions concerning faith from scientific data, thus segregating the New Philosophy from the old religion, as Canon Raven put it. This segregation was only temporary. There was to follow what Basil Willey has described as the golden age of natural theology,⁵⁴ during which the scientists joined forces with the theologians in calling attention to the mighty works of the omnipotent Creator.

Canon Raven points out that in England, in contrast to the situation on the continent, there was an enthusiastic welcome for the New Philosophy. He writes,

" The remarkable group known as the Cambridge Platonists gave it a secure position in the university; and outside it churchmen like Jeremy Taylor and John Tillotson and nonconformists like William Penn and Richard Baxter had in

common a sincere conviction that the works of the Lord were rightly sought out by his people."⁵⁵

The Cambridge Platonists were concerned to refute the materialistic philosophy of Hobbes and by their writing and their preaching influenced not only philosophers such as Locke but scientists like John Ray. Henry More's Antidote Against Atheism (1653) and Ralph Cudworth's True Intellectual System of the Universe (1678) were among the influential works of this group, while Benjamin Whichcote's sermons in Trinity Church influenced generations of Cambridge men.⁵⁶

The year following Bacon's death saw the birth of two apologists for the Christian faith who were first and foremost scientists, Robert Boyle, the great Chemist and John Ray, the botanist. Robert Boyle (1627-1691), one of the founders of the Royal Society, is remembered not only by the law that bears his name but as the founder of the Boyle lectureship for the defence of Christianity. In his work entitled, Seraphick Love; Some Motives and Incentives to the Love of God, Pathetically Discours'd of in a Letter to a Friend (1665), Boyle wrote of his own faith thus,

" I must needs acknowledge . . . that when with bold Telescopes I survey the Old and Newly discover'd Stars and Planets that adorn the upper Region of the World; and when with excellent Microscopes I discern in otherwise Invisible Objects, the unimitable Subtilty of Nature's curious Workmanship; and when, in a word, by the help of Anatomical knives, and the light of Chymical Furnaces, I

study the Book of Nature . . . I find my self oftentimes reduc'd to exclaim with the Psalmist, How manifold are thy works, O Lord ? in wisdom hast thou made them all."⁵⁷

This verse from Psalm 104 provided the text for more than one seventeenth century scientist. John Ray's Wisdom of God Manifested in the Creation (1691) was an influential work and its popularity lasted on into the following century when it was studied by Wesley and Paley among many others. Thomas Burnet was at variance with other apologists of his time in that while he saw evidence of design in the universe it was a marred design. In his Sacred Theory of the Earth (1684) he described the world as a mighty ruin, spoiled by the sinfulness of man. One gains the impression that but for the Fall the oceans and the mountains would have been as symmetrically arranged and formally set out as the garden of a seventeenth century mansion.⁵⁸

Like Boyle, Isaac Newton was devoted to science and yet was sincerely devoted to his religion.⁵⁹ To Newton as much as any-one we owe the concept of a mechanical universe, but it was not automatic, and, in a frequently quoted passage, he traced the mechanism back to a first cause.

" Whereas the main Business of Natural Philosophy is to argue from Phenomena without feigning Hypotheses, and to deduce Causes from Effects, till we come to the very first Cause, which certainly is not mechanical. . . Whence is it that Nature doth nothing in vain, and whence arises all that Order and Beauty which we see in the World ? . . . Does it not appear from Phenomena that there is a Being

incorporeal, living, intelligent, omnipresent, who in infinite Space, as it were in his Sensory, sees the things themselves intimately, and throughly perceives them, and comprehends them wholly by their immediate presence to himself ?"⁶⁰

Newton, however, was remembered more for his mechanistic interpretation of the universe than for his religious outlook, and his followers in the scientific field, developed the concept of the mechanical universe, until, as Canon Raven remarked, "with Charles Darwin, man himself was deposed from the position of controller and graded as part of the machine".⁶¹

The physico-theological argument became firmly established as part of Christian apologetic, and, in spite of Hume's refutation, maintained its popularity in the nineteenth century, its chief exponent being William Paley. Paley's Natural Theology, or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity collected from the appearances of Nature (1802) was dedicated to his patron, the Bishop of Durham, to whom he explained how it came to be written. Like the recent best-seller, Honest to God, it owes its existence to an indisposition. Paley set out to repair his deficiency in the public performance of his office by his work in the study. His enforced leisure was not to be wasted and he resolved to speak through the press. Within nineteenth-century limitations the Evidences became a best-seller. The production of this type of apologetic was stimulated by the eighth Earl of Bridgewater who died in 1829 leaving £8,000 to the President of the Royal Society to be paid to authors selected

by him who would be commissioned to write on "the power, wisdom and goodness of God as manifested in the Creation". One of the best known of the treatises is that of Thomas Chalmers, The Adaptation of External Nature to the Moral and Intellectual Condition of Man. Chalmers discovers design in the moral and intellectual life of man rather than in the purely physical world. His argument has some affinity with the moral argument of Kant. In conscience man has a unique instrument designed to enable him to live the good life in this world. The world is designed in general to make a virtuous species happy but there remain individual injustices which demand redress in another life and so we are led on to belief in immortality and in God who sustains the moral universe. While Chalmers believed that natural theology could take man a long way revelation was still necessary. In his description of the merits and defects of natural theology he anticipated Tillich. Natural theology can ask the questions but it cannot give all the answers.

" All the resources and expedients of natural theology are incompetent for this solution - it being, in fact, the great desiderat^dum which it cannot satisfy. Still it performs an important part in making us sensible of the desiderat^dum. . . . Let us not overlook the importance of that which it does, in its utter helplessness as to that which it does not. It puts the question, though it cannot answer the question."⁶³

This conclusion was to be echoed by Tillich in his Gifford lectures over a century later:

" Man as man knows the question of God. He is estranged

but not cut off, from God. This is the foundation for the limited right of what traditionally was called "natural theology". Natural theology was meaningful to the extent that it gave an analysis of the human situation and the question of God implied in it . . . None of the conclusions which argue for the existence of God is valid. Their validity extends as far as the questioning analysis, not beyond it."⁶⁴

Just as Tillich speaks of the revelatory answers to existential questions, so Chalmers tried to show that the Christian religion answers the questions raised by natural theology. Some of the other authors of Bridgewater treatises were not so advanced in their thought as Chalmers and still clung to Paley's type of natural theology. It is interesting to note the dates of the last editions of the treatises. These were for the respective authors: Kirby, 1853; Prout, 1855; Buckland, 1860; Whewell, 1864; Bell, 1865; Roget, 1870; Chalmers, 1884; and Kidd, 1887. In 1859 the Origin of Species was published. The flood-tide of this particular type of apologetic was receding.

10. Apologetic after Darwin

In his lecture, "Darwin and the Century of Conflict"⁶⁵, Canon Raven points out that while the publication of The Origin of Species marked the end of an epoch, as did Newton's Principia, it was a culmination of thought rather than an entirely new departure. The nineteenth century produced new discoveries in every realm of science. Already in 1800 Lamarck was proclaiming the progressive development of living creatures,⁶⁶ and Buckland,

one of the Bridgewater writers, had dismissed the traditional dating of Genesis, declaring that the Bible did not contain historical information concerning the activities of the Creator.⁶⁷ Kirby, it is true, in his treatise had attacked Lamarck and reaffirmed the Miltonic picture, but the period of friendly alliance between science and religion was coming to an end. Scientists like P.H.Gosse made desperate attempts to hold on to Genesis and geology by the supposition of a 'prochronic' phase when the earth, fossils and all, existed in the mind of God. This was followed by the act of creation which resulted in the objective existence of the earth, fossils and all.⁶⁸ On the other hand Darwin himself was wistfully religious.⁶⁹

The post-Darwinian era was dominated by the unseemly struggle between the representatives of science and religion. In 1864 the Oxford Declaration was issued by Dr. Pusey and Lord Shaftesbury and supported by eleven thousand clergy, denouncing those who did not regard the whole Bible as the Word of God. Gladstone and Huxley kept the conflict alive in the years that followed. There were, of course, representatives of liberalism in theological circles, such as F.D.Maurice and Charles Kingsley, who readily accepted the new truths of science as widening our knowledge of God's ways. In general, however, natural theology as apologetic lost its appeal. James Ward, himself an opponent of agnosticism and naturalism, commenting on the natural theology of Paley and the Bridgewater treatises, said towards the end of the century,

" Nobody reads these books now, and nobody writes others like them. Such arguments have ceased to be edifying, or even safe, since they cut both ways, as the formidable array of facts capable of an equally cogent dysteleological application sufficiently shows."⁷⁰

J.H.Stirling, writing in 1889, spoke of natural theology as being out of fashion for twenty years. By natural theology he meant the Paleyan apologetic. He commented,

" He who should take it up now as Paley took it up, or as Lord Brougham took it up, would simply be regarded as a fossil."⁷¹

Paley had quoted Sturm as holding that an examination of the eye was a cure for atheism, but Helmholtz in 1893 described the eye as an instrument that a scientific optician would be ashamed to make.⁷²

Thus natural theology of the nineteenth century pattern fell into disfavour with both Science and Religion. The scientists protested that their premisses did not lead to the conclusion that an all-wise, all-powerful creator had formed the world, and religious leaders appealed to scriptural authority where their predecessors had been happy to set the book of nature side by side with the Bible. However the Bible itself was not immune to scientific investigation and textual criticism further undermined the authority of "Revelation". A new apologetic was needed which would take into account the vast territories opened up by science in the nineteenth century. Lord Gifford was among those who thought that if only the theologians and

philosophers could draw new maps it might still be possible to find a way to God in the strange new world.

11. Gifford Lecturers as Apologists

In the course of one of his lectures Clement Webb remarked in an aside that "apologetic is not the business of a Gifford lecturer".⁷³ This would be true if by "apologetic" he meant the defence of the Christian faith, but Lord Gifford certainly expected his lecturers to commend belief in God. He had declared,

" And my desire and hope is that these lectureships and lectures may promote and advance among all classes of the community the true knowledge of Him Who is, and there is none and nothing beside Him, in Whom we live and move and have our being."

The lectureships were to be established

" for the teaching and diffusion of sound views regarding them (sc.true knowledge of God, &c)among the whole population of Scotland."

Lord Gifford had added,

" I think that such knowledge, if real, lies at the root of all well being."

From this addition we may surmise that in Gifford's view it is part of the function of natural theology to deal with the problem of the "if real", that is, to consider the objective truth of religion, but it is also clearly permissible, if not desirable that the Gifford lecturer should promote and advance such knowledge of God as he has been able to arrive at by means of natural theology.

None of the lecturers has claimed that he has found an outright proof of the existence of God. Apologetic, however, does not require a proof; it is sufficient if a position can be defended on rational grounds or shown to be worthy of belief. As we saw, a number of the scientists found evidence of design, but not such evidence as would enable them to make an unequivocal assertion of the existence of a beneficent and omnipotent creator. Tiele trusted that his new science of religion would "help to bring home to the restless spirits of our times the truth that there is no rest for them unless 'they arise and go to their Father'".⁷⁴ The idealists believed that the coherence of their system was a sufficient recommendation for belief. In a letter to a friend Sir Henry Jones affirmed his belief in the apologetic function of natural theology,

" The ultimate meaning of Reality is love. If that is true, there must be a soul, a personal God, to do the loving. The task of philosophy is to justify that view."⁷⁵

At the end of his own series of lectures he claimed that by using only methods of science he had been able to support a rational religious faith.

J.H.Stirling retained a certain amount of confidence in the traditional proofs, and John Laird after re-examining the proofs claimed to have made a "plausible" case for theism. Sorley, Taylor and De Burgh were convincing exponents of the argument from moral experience. More recently C.A.Campbell asserted at the end of his series of lectures,

" Objective philosophical thinking, in which straight metaphysical argument is supplemented by reflection upon the implications of man's moral consciousness, leads independently to belief in an infinite and eternal being who is the sole ultimate reality, the creator of the finite temporal world, and the source of the moral law which has absolute authority over man's conduct in that world."⁷⁶

But even this is only a claim that reflection leads to belief.

The Gifford discussion, especially where scientists have been involved, has led to a clarification of the two questions, How? and Why? Gilson recognised that we must ask both questions and that the scientist is peculiarly suited to answer the question, How?

" But if any one looks only for the how, can he be surprised if he fails to find the why?"⁷⁷

The metaphysician and the man of faith go beyond the "How?" to the "Why?". The distinction was made by Charles Kingsley in the generation after Darwin in a book dedicated to his son and his schoolfellows, Madam How and Lady Why. He complains about philosophers who make mistakes about how and why and criticises books which do not really tell us about "Why and Because" but only "How and So". He tells us that Madam How is the servant of Lady Why, "though she has a Master over her again - whose name I leave you to guess."⁷⁸

Apologists have not always distinguished between the two questions. The answer to the question how the watch works is

in one sphere. When we ask why someone took the trouble to make a watch we are in the realm of ends, and in his book entitled, The Realm of Ends, James Ward wrote,

" Faith contradicts nothing that science is in a position to affirm, and asserts nothing that science is in a position to deny. Science cannot disclaim it as error, nor can it appeal to science as truth. But what science can neither positively affirm nor positively deny may still count for something as being more or less probable; and 'probabilities are the guide of life'."⁷⁹

Once we believe in God for some other cause science can tell us much of the way God works, but the scientist as scientist cannot go beyond the question of how the world works. At least this seems to be the general conclusion of the Gifford scientists, some of whom, like Heisenberg, claimed nothing more for science than that it led to a reverent agnosticism.

If Kant is right about the arguments for the existence of God then natural theology cannot produce a completely convincing apologetic. If St. Augustine's experience is to be taken as typical then natural theology not only cannot but need not go all the way. Apologists sometimes argue that the existence of God is at least a probability and that faith is in the nature of a wager. But, as James Ward declared, "the prudence thus advocated is not faith; and assuredly is not religion."⁸⁰ St. Augustine's religion was not based upon probabilities even though he weighed the arguments intellectually before he took the final step. A modern journalist, writing of his own spiritual Odyssey, described

the point to which he had been led by natural theology in this way:

" St. Thomas Aquinas's five proofs of God seemed to me unanswerable, but . . . I was obliged to admit that whilst they carried with them intellectual conviction they had not made God come alive for me."⁸¹

Later he describes how he and his wife were still searching,

" We had come to accept the intellectual case for God, to see that without it not only Catholicism but the universe itself made nonsense. We had discovered with some surprise that the great thinkers and philosophers of the Church had made out a better case for God's existence than Marx and Engels had done for his non-existence."⁸²

It was not until he came to the point of commitment that he found what could be described as a satisfying faith.

More than one Gifford lecturer has pointed out that the arguments for the existence of God are unable to convince the unbeliever and are no longer needed by the believer. Yet the believer may still wish to defend his faith and apologetic may serve the defence of faith as well as its propagation, and it may well bring an enquirer or an opponent to a point where he can see for himself. Perhaps Lord Gifford hoped for more than this from natural theology. He wanted the knowledge imparted by the lecturers to be "true and felt". Rational examination can test the truth of the knowledge. Rational argument can lead to the assertion of probabilities, but if a rational argument appears to lead to a "felt" knowledge it is because some other element than reason has entered the situation. Commenting on Paley's

apologetic, Newman wrote,

" If I am asked to use Paley's argument for my own conversion, I say plainly I do not want to be converted by a smart syllogism; if I am asked to convert others by it, I say plainly I do not care to overcome their reason without touching their hearts. I wish to deal not with controversialists, but with inquirers."⁸³

This underlines the limitation of natural theology as apologetic, but natural theology may allay doubts of the mind, enabling the heart to be touched by faith.

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1	1 Cor. 1.22.	
2	Acts 14. 15-17 (RSV)	
3	Acts 17. 26-29 (RSV)	
4	Romans 1.19-23 (RSV)	
5	<u>G.41.</u> p.26	
6	<u>G.77.</u> Vol.2. p.154	
7	<u>Primitive Christianity</u> , 1911, Vol.4. p.404	
8	<u>Ibid.</u> p.405	
9	<u>Dialogue with Trypho</u> , Ch.7. tr. G.Reith in <u>Ante-Nicene Christian Library</u> , Vol.2. pp.95-6.	
10	<u>Ibid.</u> Ch.8. p.96.	
11	<u>G.41.</u> p.25	
12	<u>G.103.</u> Vol.1. p.37.	
13	<u>History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages</u> , 1955, p.16	
14	<u>G.41.</u> pp. 192-3.	
15	Irenaeus, <u>Contra Haereses</u> , iv.33.8.	
16	<u>Stromata</u> , I.28. tr.W.Wilson, <u>Ante-Nicene Christian Library</u> , Vol. IV, p.366	

- 17 E.g. John Watson : "The object of the Apologists is, by stating and defending this Christian philosophy, to strengthen the faith of believers." G.103. Vol. 1. p.34.
- 18 G.79. p.308
- 19 G.77. Vol.2. p.262.
- 20 G.103. Vol.1. pp.57-8.
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- 31 Summa Contra Gentes, Bk.I. chs 2-3.
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Chapter Three

Natural Theology and Metaphysics

1	Metaphysics	page 278
2	Early Greek Speculation	281
3	Plato and Aristotle	287
4	St. Thomas Aquinas	292
5	A New Beginning	296
6	The Limitations of Metaphysical Speculation	300
7	The Hegelian World View	304
8	Metaphysics in the Twentieth Century	308
	Reference Notes	312

1. Metaphysics

As we turn from our examination of natural theology as apologetic to its relationship to metaphysics we may remind ourselves that the two aspects can be confused. John Stuart Millar, writing in the latter part of the nineteenth century, said,

" The whole of prevalent metaphysics of the present century is one tissue of suborned evidence in favour of religion."¹

Similar accusations have been made against Gifford lecturers, but as we have seen, Lord Gifford himself distinguished the two tasks. He asked first that lecturers should consider the truth of religion with the precision of scientific method. Secondly, he wished this knowledge, if real, to be propagated. He sought a religion based on metaphysical speculation rather than on supposed special revelation. His address to the Edinburgh Young Men's Christian Association, delivered in November, 1878, just ten years before the first Gifford lectures, reveals his attitude of mind and gives an indication of the intellectual atmosphere of the period. The High Court Judge gave this advice to young men :

" Now I take the opportunity of saying to you, - young men, keenly desirous of mental and moral elevation, - Don't neglect Metaphysics! The Sciences of the Mind, and the doctrine of the Unseen and the Universal! What are proudly though not quite justly called the Physical Sciences are perhaps now in the ascendant, (and very self-

asserting some of them are); and there are not wanting among their votaries and champions those who arrogantly claim for them alone the name of "Sciences", as if the polar collocations and whirling vortices of enchanted atoms were all that ultimately man could really know . . . I make no apology for asking you to think. Your presence here declares your readiness and your anxiety to do so. No truth of the smallest value can be attained without thought, without thought often painfully earnest and protracted."²

Very much influenced by Spinoza, he believed that without a true doctrine of substance and cause, philosophy would be a delusion and religion a dream.³ He declared to the young men of Edinburgh,

" God is the substance of your soul and mine, aye, the very substance, its very self, in strictest truth. And your soul and mine are but "forms" of God."⁴

In his peroration Judge Gifford summed up the evidence and demanded a verdict.

" I have not gone a single step out of my way as a student of metaphysic and mental science, and if I have had to speak to you of God, frankly and freely, that is only because God is necessarily found by all who fairly follow up the scientific idea of substance to its deepest roots and to its highest sources. The highest science always becomes religious, nay, religion itself."⁵

But Lord Gifford's knowledge of the weakness of human nature and human argument led him to conclude with the reminder that humanum est errare.

It is clear from this address that Lord Gifford himself believed that a study of metaphysics would inevitably lead to a theistic conclusion. He was talking to young men who already

belonged to a Christian association so that his purpose was not simply apologetic. He seems to have been anxious to demonstrate to his hearers that however they had arrived at belief in God such a belief could be supported by reasoned argument. Should their trust in the authority of the organised church waver, as undoubtedly his own had done, they could still rely on metaphysical support for their faith.

It has been said that as soon as a man used the word "God" he is doing metaphysics. In his elementary religious assertions man was trying to make sense of his limited universe. His primitive scientific knowledge led him to discover a unity of cause and effect. In his myths he intuitively sought such a unity and his broadening vision led him to seek a unity within which his scientific knowledge and his religious insights could be comprehended. From this humble beginning arose that study so highly commended by Lord Gifford in the eighteen-seventies and so highly suspect in our own times.

It needed an Aristotle to specify the function of this study and to give it a name. Its subject matter is Being qua Being.⁶ It is man's attempt, using ordinary methods of reasoning, to reach conclusions concerning the ultimate reality of the Universe. Leibniz described the function of metaphysics in a letter quoted by John Laird.

" Since what perfects our mind (if we leave on one side the illumination of grace) is the demonstrative knowledge of the greatest truths by their causes or reasons, it must

be admitted that metaphysics or natural theology, which treats of immaterial substances, and particularly of God and the soul, is the most important of all."⁷

Thus he identified natural theology with metaphysics, and, as we have seen, a number of Gifford lecturers made the assumption that the subject prescribed by Lord Gifford was indeed metaphysics. Whitehead, for instance, set himself the task of producing "a system of general ideas in terms of which every element in our experience can be interpreted".

2. Early Greek Speculation

James Adam claimed that natural theology in its main principles is a development from Greek metaphysics.⁸ Christopher Dawson described pre-Socratic philosophy as essentially a natural theology, in the sense of a doctrine of the divine order of nature, "a via media between the irrational mythology of the traditional religion and the irreligious rationalism which was already beginning to attract the western mind".⁹ We saw in an earlier chapter how the Greek thinkers criticised the concepts of popular religion. Now we turn our attention to the constructive thought through which they tried to explain the universe. When the early thinkers attempted to find this explanation in a single cosmological principle they became metaphysicians; when they called this principle or principles divine they became natural theologians.

Thales floated his earth on water and saw water as the source of all things; Anaximander posited the 'boundless' or

'infinite'; Anaximenes saw air as the primal substance. It is difficult to know what Thales meant when he talked of 'gods', but with Anaximander we are clearly in the realm of natural theology.

" With this philosopher," writes Jaeger, " we are for the first time in a position to see clearly how that which we may call his theology is a direct outgrowth from the germ of his new intuition of φύσις . . . Anaximander's cosmos marks the triumph of the intellect over a whole world of rough and unformed powers. . . . Even the old gods are denied admission to the new world-system, though their names and their cults persist. Their passing leaves a gap which the philosopher now must fill."¹⁰

Anaximander saw that the beginning of things must go back not to one element like water but to something from which all the other diverse elements draw their being, something which is itself boundless, hence apeiron. From the evidence of the fragments¹¹ Anaximander appears to have been the first to identify the apeiron with the arché or first principle. We learn from the same fragments that it is 'immortal and imperishable', 'eternal and ageless', 'encompassing and governing all things' and 'encompassing all worlds', and, according to Aristotle, was to be identified with 'the divine' (τὸ Θεῖον). It may be that modern man can more readily think of Zeus as a god than the abstract apeiron just as he clings to the concept of 'Father' and finds it difficult to pray to the 'Depth of Being', but Jaeger silences this complaint.

" We have no right . . . to complain that Anaximander's god is not a god one can pray to, or that physical speculation is not true religion. Surely no one will deny

that we simply cannot conceive of any advanced form of religion as lacking the idea of endlessness and eternity which Anaximander links with his new concept of the Divine.¹³

In identifying the apeiron with air, Anaximenes "spiritualised" the scientific concept of Anaximander and made the world into a breathing soul for as the human soul is identified with air so breath and air compass the whole universe.¹⁴ But neither in Anaximander or Anaximenes do we find the unifying concept of one God.

Xenophanes, as we have seen, was a dispassionate critic of religion, but he also went beyond negative criticism to the conception of one God, who is uncreated, who neither in body or mind resembles man, yet is all eye, all thought and all hearing. What precisely he meant by this is much disputed.¹⁵ It may be that the one God of Xenophanes is no more than the One Being of Parmenides in theological attire. Parmenides does not identify Being with God and, as Jaeger remarks,¹⁶ it is more in line with the character of his thought to speak of the Mystery of Being rather than of God. Jaeger writes.

" The religious element lies more in the way the man has been affected by his discovery, and in the firm and decided handling of the alternatives of truth and appearance, than in any classification of the object of his research as divine."¹⁷

Even if the name of God is not used we have natural theology in embryo and the distinction made by Parmenides between Being and non-being was to influence natural theologians down the centuries.

In our own times we find echoes of Parmenides in the theology of Paul Tillich, who made the leap that Parmenides failed to make, asserting in his Gifford lectures,

" In the moment in which one says that God is or that he has being, the question arises as to how his relation to being is to be understood. The only possible answer seems to be that God is being-itself, in the sense of the power of being or the power to conquer non-being."¹⁸

When we read¹⁹ that Being is un-become, imperishable, whole, single, unmoved, limitless and complete, we are not far from the mediaeval conception of God.

Heraclitus takes us into the realm of intuition and it will be more appropriate to consider his work in a later chapter. The word used by Parmenides to designate the activity of the philosophical mind is $\nu\omicron\sigma\iota\varsigma$, where Heraclitus favours the word $\phi\rho\omicron\nu\sigma\iota\varsigma$ - the traditional Greek term for 'right thinking' or 'right intuition' with more particular reference to practical conduct.²⁰ There is a distinction between metaphysical speculation and mystical insight even though it is difficult to draw it clearly particularly when mystics speculate on the basis of their insights.

With Empedocles we return to the emphasis on physics. He discarded the Parmenidean concept of the One and posited four primary elements, fire, water, earth and air. There are two further powers, Love and Strife, which cause the mixing and unmixing of the basic elements. The four elements are personified

as Zeus, Hera, Aidoneus and Nestis; Philia and Neikos (i.e. Love and Strife) are said to be gods of equal rank with the other four. Thus Empedocles mingles metaphysics and mythology and gives us a clue to the relationship between metaphysics and natural theology. Scientific and philosophical man seeks an explanation of the universe and produces some kind of metaphysical construction. Religious man has already worshipped divinity in some form and has discovered what Otto has termed the Numinous. When religious man becomes philosophical he identifies the Numinous of his worship with the Essential Being of his metaphysics and his metaphysics then becomes natural theology. It is such knowledge of God that he can arrive at by reasoning about the facts of the universe. So Empedocles identified the physical elements of his universe with the gods of the old time religion. Later Aquinas would make the same transition from metaphysics to natural theology by the simple link, "And this (the First Cause, Prime Mover, etc.) we call God". Developing scientific knowledge and speculative thought may change the image of God but the non-rational element persists if only in the names of the gods or God.

Anaxagoras, a contemporary of Empedocles, was one of the first teleological thinkers and his concept of Nous became formative of later metaphysical thought. Within the physical world everything is a mixture with the exception of Nous or Mind.²¹ In the fragments quoted by James Adam we find, among other things, that Nous 'owns no master but itself' and is

'alone, itself to itself'. Nous is further the 'subtlest and purest of all things, and moreover has all knowledge about everything and the greatest strength'. Nous has power over the movement that generated the world and set in order the things that did not exist but now do. Our minds are reflections of the divine Nous, which enables us to have some understanding of the divine purpose. Here in the fragments of the work of Anaxagoras we have the beginnings of the teleological argument which was to be developed by so many later thinkers. Yet even here we have the implicit premiss that Nous is the Divine. This was to prove a fruitful line of thought and Aristotle had no doubts about the contribution to thought made by Anaxagoras when he declared that among the earlier thinkers Anaxagoras seemed like a sober man among the drunk.²²

Diogenes failed to see the distinction between mind and matter that had been so clear to Anaxagoras; for him mind and matter were one. He believed that through his study of nature and in particular the positioning of the heavenly bodies he had seen a plan which offered a clue to the existence and nature of the Divine. So far the existence of the Divine had been taken for granted. Up to this time the problem had been the nature of the gods or God rather than their existence. With Diogenes the problem switches to the existence of God and this was the question posed for Plato, Aristotle and their successors.

3. Plato and Aristotle

Socrates was interested in man rather than the universe,²³ and it is not surprising that his disciple, Plato, should begin his philosophising by considering the nature of man. It is true that he saw man within the context of the universe but the clue to the meaning of the universe was to be found in the mind of man rather than in the external universe. According to the allegory of the cave the 'things' of the universe are no more than shadows. The visible world is the image of the invisible; the highest faculty of the soul is reason, and the lowest what we call scientific knowledge - knowledge of the shadows.²⁴ Metaphysics, for Plato, is indeed 'beyond' the physical, for the physical gives only a distorted reflection of the real. Man's pilgrimage is upward from the things seen to the things unseen.²⁵ Man must set his mind on things immortal and divine.²⁶

It is notoriously difficult to summarise Plato's ideas of religion for the simple reason that there are clear contradictions exemplified in the vacillation between singular and plural in his references to deity. In a recent study of the influence of religion on Plato and the influence of Plato on religion²⁷, J.K. Feibleman writes of Plato's two religions, which correspond to his two moods in philosophy. The one is a kind of supernatural mysticism, the heritage of Orphicism and consistent with his idealist philosophy. The other is a naturalistic religion, consistent with popular Greek religion and related to his realist

philosophy. The former approach was adopted by the neoplatonists and probably represents Plato's personal religion. Aristotle's religious metaphysic follows the naturalistic realist approach.

Plato did not claim that he could demonstrate the existence of God. He took a humbly agnostic attitude. "This or something like it is true," he wrote in the Phaedo concerning his views of the after-life.²⁸ "God knows whether it is true," he said in the Republic of his allegory of the Cave.²⁹ It was in this spirit that he speculated in the Timaeus concerning the creation of the world. He did not claim to give exact notions but only probabilities "as like as any others".³⁰ Because Plato's natural theology is the product of insight and intuition rather than metaphysical argument, it will find a place in a later chapter. Aristotle's natural theology is more clearly based on metaphysical speculation.

Aristotle, like Plato, criticised the early mythological conceptions of deity.³¹ Like Plato, he saw the clue to the meaning of the universe in the activity of the human mind. The highest form of human activity is contemplation, but because of his limitations man cannot attain perfect self-realisation. In God there must be identity of thought with its objects and therefore in God there must be perfect contemplation. Being qua being is the subject matter of metaphysics³², and God is essential being. Aristotle offered proof of the existence of God, which was to be the basis of all future attempts at demonstration, a task that Plato never essayed in quite the same

way.

Movement gives the key to Aristotle's metaphysical system. In the ordinary experiences of life nothing moves spontaneously, but this rule cannot apply throughout the universe or there would be no movement and therefore no change. Since we do in fact experience movement and change there must be some kind of movement which is not caused by other movement. Aristotle thought that he had discovered such movement in the circular movement of what he describes as the 'first heaven', i.e., the planets, the sun and the moon. This movement must then be explained. Aristotle either thought or talked anthropomorphically for he described the first heaven as being moved by its soul, and the further fifty five spheres about which he speculates are also moved by their souls. We then have to ask how souls are moved. The movement of bodies is described as motion but the movement of souls is described as emotion, and so the souls or intelligences are moved by love or desire directed towards the prime mover. The prime mover does not reciprocate the love. Further he is not the creator of the universe, for matter and subordinated forms are eternal. He is not the providential ruler since his thought is of himself alone. Although he is loved he is not a god of love since emotion of any sort would mar his contemplation. He is purely transcendent. He is thus the god of pure thought but not the God of religious experience. As Gilson remarks,

" The God of St. Thomas and Dante is a God who loves, the god of Aristotle is a god who does not refuse to be

loved; the love that moves the heavens and the stars in Aristotle is the love of the heavens and the stars for god, but the love that moves them in St. Thomas and Dante is the love of God for the world."³³

It may be that we are asking too much of natural theology if we expect it to provide a ready made religion. Metaphysics tackles problems of causes and ends and motion, but if it leads to worship it is because something has been added to the metaphysical speculation. Aristotle attempted pure metaphysics.

It may be true that St. Thomas's re-interpretation adds certain elements missing from Aristotle but it would be wrong to dismiss Aristotle's metaphysic of God on that ground. J.H. Stirling claims that Aristotle's Prime Mover is as near to the Christian God as a Greek could get.³⁴ He describes the well known passage in the seventh chapter of the twelfth book of the Metaphysics as the De Profundis of Aristotle and renders it in this way :

" As there comes not possibly anything, or all, out of night and nothingness, there must be the unmoved mover, who in his eternity, is actual, and substantial, one. Unmoved himself, and without a strain, he is the end-aim of the universe towards which all strain. Even beauty is not moved but moves; and we move to beauty because it is beauty, not that it is beauty only because we move to it. And the goal, the aim, the end, moves even as beauty moves, or as something that is loved moves. It is thought that has made the beginning. As mere actuality, actuality pure and simple, as that which could not not-be, God knows

not possibility, he is before and above and without potentiality, the beginning, the middle, and the end, the first and last, the principle and goal, without peers as without parts, immaterial, imperishable, personal, single, one, eternal and immortal. On him hang the heavens and the earth. And his joy of life is always, as is for brief moments, when at its best, ours. In him indeed is that enduringly so. But it is impossible for us. For joy in him is his actuality, - even as to us the greatest joy is to be awake, to see and feel, to think, and so to revive to ourselves memories and hopes. Thought, intellection is his; and his intellection is the substantial intellection of that which is substantial, the perfect intellection of that which is perfect . . . What, then, there is of divine in intellection, that is diviner still in its actuality in God; and speculation is what is the highest joy and the best. And if, as with us interruptedly, it is always in felicity so with God, then there is cause for wonder; and for much more wonder if the felicity with God is of a higher order than ever it is with us. But that is so. In him is life; for the actuality of intellection is life, and that actuality is his. Actuality that is absolute - that, as life of him, is life best and eternal. So it is we say that God is a living being, perfect and eternal. Life eternal and enduring being belong to God. And God is that."³⁵

This is the high watermark of Greek metaphysical theology. It is true that we cannot read Aristotle or Plato without reading into their words and phrases meanings that come from Christian thought. Further we are eclectic in that we select passages that can be fitted into the framework of Christian theology. Nevertheless Aristotle taught Christian thinkers how to go about the business

of natural theology. Without him the Christian philosophy of the middle ages would have been very different.

4. St. Thomas Aquinas

We turn now to the middle ages, not because there is no metaphysical speculation between Aristotle and Aquinas, but because pre-Christian philosophers did little more than follow up trains of thought started by Plato and Aristotle and the earlier Christian were more concerned with apologetic and the creation of a dogmatic theology. In the thought of St. Augustine and St. Anselm philosophy was subordinate to faith and had no rights of its own. In the hands of Aquinas metaphysical argument was a new tool which would complement revealed theology.

St. Thomas believed that it is possible, by metaphysical argument, to reach the conclusion that God exists. With Aristotle, he conceived the subject matter of metaphysics to be being qua being, and, since God is pure being, this must mean that metaphysics yields some knowledge of God. A prior knowledge of the world is, of course, necessary.

" In order to know the things that the reason can investigate concerning God, a knowledge of many things must already be possessed. For almost all philosophy is directed towards the knowledge of God, and that is why metaphysics, which deals with divine things, is the last part of philosophy to be learned."³⁶

On the other hand there is a knowledge of God which surpasses reason and we only know God truly "when we believe him to be

above everything that it is possible for a man to think about him".³⁷ We may remind ourselves of threefold classification of man's knowledge of God, which he describes thus:

" There is . . . in man a threefold knowledge of things divine. Of these, the first is that in which man, by the natural light of reason, ascends to a knowledge of God through creatures. The second is that by which the divine truth - exceeding the human intellect - descends on us in the manner of revelation, not, however, as something made clear to be seen, but as something spoken in words to be believed. The third is that by which the human mind will be elevated to gaze perfectly on the things revealed."³⁸

Aquinas thus offers a clear line of demarcation between the findings of reason and the gift of faith. The knowledge afforded by reason is produced by the evidence whereas the knowledge of faith comes by an act of will. Neither rational knowledge nor faith knowledge can give to man the vision of God which is the ultimate source of true felicity.

St. Thomas set out his demonstration of the existence of God in the Summa Contra Gentiles and the Summa Theologica. As given in the Summa Theologica the first of the five ways, described as "the more manifest way", is a reproduction of Aristotle's argument from motion. The proof in the Summa Contra Gentiles is elaborated for the benefit of the unbelievers. Something moves, and it is our experience that a moving object has always been moved by something else. We cannot trace movement to infinity. Each of these propositions is confirmed

by three proofs from Aristotle, and Aquinas concludes that an unmoved mover necessarily exists. Then he makes the leap from metaphysics to natural theology by adding, "This we call God."³⁹

The other four ways have a similar conclusion. Thus

" Therefore it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause, to which everyone gives the name of God."⁴⁰

" Therefore we cannot but postulate the existence of some being having of itself its own necessity . . . This all men speak of as God."⁴¹

" Therefore there must be also something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness, and every other perfection; and this we call God."⁴²

" Therefor some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call God."⁴³

Now it is one thing to argue for the existence of an unmoved mover, a first cause, a necessary existent, a cause of being and goodness and a designer of the universe. It is another matter to identify these as one being and that one being as God.

When we speak about an unmoved mover or a first cause we are using the language of metaphysics; when we speak of God we are using the language of religion. Edward Sillem brings out the distinction.

" Sacred teaching is a supernatural theology totally different from the natural theology of the philosophers . . . it (natural theology) cannot meet the concrete needs of all men, nor indeed bring the good news of God's might

and loving salus to any."⁴⁴

This brings before us once again the relationship between metaphysics and natural theology. As a result of metaphysical argument Aquinas could conclude that the unmoved mover exists. By faith he accepted the God known by revelation and through religious experience. Then he identifies the two. His metaphysics can then be rightly termed natural theology since it consists in that knowledge of God accessible to natural reason. But however we set out the arguments of Aquinas we can never reach the God of religion. There must always come some point where we assert the identity of the unmoved mover of our metaphysics and the God of our worship.

In his book, He Who Is,⁴⁵ E.L.Mascall raised the problem of this identification. Indeed he raised the prior question of the identification of the First Mover, the First Efficient Cause, the First Necessary Being, the First and Supreme Perfection and the Ultimate Final Cause. He asked, "Might not the universe be governed by a Supreme Council of Five?"⁴⁶ This unity, Mascall showed, is arguable on the basis of necessity, but St. Thomas was content to demonstrate the unity by identifying each with God. The five ways are not to be regarded as arguments strengthening each other, but as demonstrating five different truths concerning the nature of God. Mascall made the distinction between the intellectual and the intuitional acceptance of the existence of God, using the analogy of the student of mathematics

who sees the chain of reasoning but needs to "get hold" of the solution. Something must 'click'. What the Thomist proofs afford is the apprehension of the existence of God rather than an experience of his reality. The latter belongs to religion; the former to natural theology.

Unlike some later philosophers, Aquinas never pretended that a man could find a satisfying religious faith through natural theology. He was concerned to show that the fundamental truth of religion, namely the existence of God, could be reached by reasoned argument. He was concerned to demonstrate by metaphysical argument that there is no contradiction between the truths of revelation and the findings of reason. The philosophy of Thomas, as Clement Webb declared, "is concerned not merely to defend a heterogeneous assemblage of dogmas but to penetrate to principles which may exhibit these dogmas as forming an organic unity."⁴⁷

5. A New Beginning

Descartes' methodological doubt is not an entirely new approach in philosophy, and those who assume that little or nothing happened between the time of Plotinus and Descartes ignore the fact that the so-called modern philosophers inherited not only the problems but some of the methods of Augustine and the mediaevals. For Augustine, Anselm and Aquinas any philosophising on the basis of pure reason is carried out with the assumption that there are truths of faith. Descartes made much of his claim for the independence of philosophy but he

diminished the effectiveness of the claim when he declared that for practical purposes he intended to adhere firmly to the faith in which he had been educated from childhood⁴⁸. Nevertheless from the time of Descartes the primacy of faith can no longer be assumed. Descartes claimed that as a philosopher he would only accept as true those things which were presented so clearly and distinctly that all doubt was removed. He resolved to seek no other knowledge than that which he could find within himself or within the great book of the world. He tells us that he was particularly delighted with mathematics because of the certainty of the demonstrations but he was also careful to mention his reverence for theology. The conclusions which Descartes reached through his process of methodological doubt were happily in line with the traditional thinking of the church, and for this reason he was able to combine the task of metaphysician and apologist more easily than some of his successors. He believed that through his metaphysical reasoning he was reaching knowledge of God without recourse to revelation. Close analysis, however, would show that there is a point where he introduces a clear and distinct idea of God and it is not therefore surprising that this should appear in his conclusion.

Spinoza not only sought a system of philosophy that would yield mathematical certainty but openly attacked those who looked to the authority of scripture rather than reason. "Men who contemn reason and reject understanding," he declared, "are

strangely believed to be possessed of heavenly light."⁴⁹ His views of the scriptures were very much in advance of his time and he criticised those " who mostly assume as the basis of all enquiry into the true meaning of the Bible, that it is everywhere inspired and literally true."⁵⁰ One obstacle in the way of grasping the truth is "the idea that Reason should be subordinate to Theology".⁵¹ Spinoza admitted that the prophets grasped truths beyond the reach of lesser men, but this was because of their vivid imaginative insight and their certainty was moral rather than mathematical. Beginning with his definitions and axioms Spinoza moved relentlessly on his mathematical way. But God was his beginning rather than his conclusion. Indeed it was his boast that

" Popular philosophy starts from creatures: Descartes starts from mind: I start from God."⁵²

The attraction of Spinoza's work, at least for some of his admirers, lies in the fact that it is a religion seeking a metaphysic rather than a metaphysical scheme concluding in a religious outlook.

Descartes had separated mind and matter, God and the world. Spinoza brought the divided universe together. More dependent upon the mystics than upon the mediaeval theologian-philosophers, Spinoza brought together Greek substance and modern scientific knowledge in what appears at times to be mysticism as much as metaphysics. For Spinoza there are three kinds of knowledge:

- (1) The first kind arises from perception, from vague or casual experience, from what Spinoza calls 'signs' - what we have heard or remember. This he calls cognitio, opinio, or imaginatio.
- (2) The second is ratio, which arises from the fact that we have common notions and adequate ideas of the proportion of things.
- (3) The third kind is scientia intuitiva, which arises from an adequate idea of the essence of God.⁵³

It is this third type of knowledge that leads eventually to the intellectual love of God. This intellectual love of God is the love wherewith God loves himself. Here we see the shadow of the mediaeval mystics and the foreshadowing of Hegelian metaphysics. Hegelian philosophy was still influential in Britain in the late nineteenth century and it is easy to see why Spinoza made such an appeal to a man like Adam Gifford. Calvinism had lost its hold on theology in Scotland and Hegelianism had enthralled her philosophy. It is not surprising that truth should be sought in an all-embracing Spinozistic philosophy to the exclusion of anything smacking of the miraculous or the irrational.

Spinoza saw the world as a unity but modern science did not need the mystic's intuition to discover this truth. It was part of the scientific data. Law and design were evident everywhere and the universe was expressive of a single mind if not the creation of such a mind. Like Descartes and Spinoza, Leibniz saw in mathematics the deepest kind of truth. Mathematics and a priori reasoning in general produce truths of reasoning as opposed to truths of fact. Because of the law of necessary reason

God is the Necessary Being behind contingent facts. God is the answer to the question why things in the universe are as they are and not otherwise. Material being is important for Leibniz as providing a mirror which reflects the necessary being of God. Berkeley was to take the argument further, denying the reality of material in order to underline the spiritual nature of the universe. But, as we have seen already, metaphysical speculation cannot reach the God of religion. If it appears to do so it is because the metaphysic has become a religion. Man does not worship Necessary Being or All-embracing Mind, but once he has worshipped God he may describe him in these terms. Locke, in spite of his empirical approach, was driven to appeal to the miraculous to find evidence for the truths beyond reason. The weakness of the new metaphysical approach lay in its divorce from faith. It remained for Hume and Kant to demonstrate unequivocally that unassisted reason cannot reach God.

6. The Limitations of Metaphysical Speculation

We have already written of Hume as a critic of religion and in this lay his strength. That he recognised this himself is borne out by the words of Cleanthes to Philo, who so often represents Hume:

" I must confess, Philo, that of all men living, the task you have undertaken of raising doubts and objections suits you best."⁵⁴

Hume demonstrated negatively as clearly as Luther and Calvin asserted positively, that religion is a matter of faith rather

than reason. He believed he could frame a complete system of the sciences based on the study of human nature, or so he claimed in the introduction to the Treatise.⁵⁵ However at the end of the first volume he reached an impasse and it seemed that reason was undermined in all its activities. There can be no certainty for the true sceptic, who "will be diffident of his philosophical doubts, as well as of his philosophical certainties."⁵⁶ In his attempt at metaphysical construction Hume could find no more than probability and therefore asserted that any religion seeking a solid foundation must look to faith rather than metaphysical speculation. So Hume who had proposed to escape from the temples of religion into the calm waters of philosophy, found that philosophy could offer no certainty. Hume was a man as well as a philosopher and he found that a few hours of dining, backgammon and friendly conversation served to dispel his philosophical doubts for all practical purposes.

Kant's refutation of the theistic arguments is too well known to need repetition. For Kant, Metaphysics is a priori reasoning about God, Freedom and Immortality. Hume was prepared to contemplate the works of nature in his search for truth and Kant included the starry heavens above as part of the evidence. But in Kant the evidence of nature is subordinated to the moral experience of the individual. After he had shown, (to his own satisfaction, conclusively), that it is impossible for reason either to prove or disprove the existence of God⁵⁸, he turned

his attention to devising a demonstration based on practical reason, which has become known as the moral argument. He wrote:

" Now I maintain that all attempts of reason to establish a theology by the aid of speculation alone are fruitless, that the principles of reason as applied to nature do not conduct us to any theological truths, and, consequently, that a rational theology can have no existence, unless it is founded upon the laws of morality."⁵⁹

It is not to be thought of as a proof of the existence of God for Kant's strictures apply to this argument as to the others. God, Freedom and Immortality are postulates of pure practical reason. In other words, belief in God, Freedom and Immortality makes sense of the individual's moral experience. This would apply within limits to the teleological argument. Given a belief in God from another source then the teleological argument makes sense. By themselves neither the teleological nor the moral arguments are able to convince the unbeliever. The physico-theological proof (as Kant describes the teleological argument) may prepare the mind for theological cognition and gives the right direction but does not offer a firm foundation for theology.⁶⁰ The evidence from moral experience involves the concept of freedom and demands more explanation than nature can afford. So we are led to postulate the existence of God, but of a God who is to be revered as the Universal Legislator. One wonders if Kant's religious experience had been as vivid as his sense of duty was strong whether we should have had a proof of the existence of God as a postulate of pure practical religion!

All that Kant does in the end is to demonstrate that it is not unreasonable to believe in God. Natural theology for Kant consists, as we saw in a previous chapter, in the careful criticism of religion, and, as we now see, in the construction of a rational scheme within which it is possible to hold a religious faith.

There were, in the main, three reactions to the Kantian criticism of metaphysics. Kant had claimed that he was abolishing knowledge to make way for faith and one understandable reaction was to leave speculation to the philosophers and to return to the external authority of the church or scriptures. Kant opened the way for both Catholics and Protestants to continue their theologising according to their particular understanding of faith.

The second reaction was to turn to science for the only reliable knowledge available. This logically would lead to positivism but apologists are not always logical and we soon find renewed attempts to prove the existence of God by inference from the wonders of nature. As we saw in the previous chapter these arguments were put forward as if Hume and Kant had never written.

The third reaction was a turning to experiential religion. Before Kant's time scriptural and ecclesiastical authority had been questioned and now that rational support of religious truth was undermined the time was ripe for a return to

a religion in which the affective element provided its own authority. In the England of the eighteenth century the Methodist Revival was in part a reaction to the philosophical theologies of the day. In spite of Wesley's claim that "to renounce reason is to renounce religion, that reason and religion go hand in hand, and that all irrational religion is false religion,"⁶¹ the strength of his movement lay in the rediscovery of experiential religion. In the realm of philosophy and theology the thought of Schleiermacher in the nineteenth century and Otto in the twentieth is symptomatic of this continued reaction. Religion is more than metaphysics and in the final chapter of this section we shall follow this development more closely.

It remains now to trace the continued development of metaphysical speculation with its culmination in the all-embracing philosophy of Hegel.

7. The Hegelian World View

Hegelian metaphysics assumes the existence of God rather than attempting to prove it. Where Descartes and others were concerned to establish the ontological argument, Hegel made what has been described as the great Ontological Assertion.⁶² He writes:

" We shall, to begin with, accept as a simple statement of fact the assertion that the result of philosophy is that God is the absolutely True, the Universal in and for itself, the All-comprehending, All-containing, that from which everything derives its substance."⁶³

This assertion is, as John Laird remarks, "the Acropolis of certain philosophies and the rock of offence to others".⁶⁴ God is neither the Substance of Spinoza nor the Monad of Leibniz. God is Spirit - the all-knowing Idea, and the Universe as we experience it is a reflection of that Being. Hegel does not use the term "natural theology". He distinguishes between "Theology of Reason" (Vernunft Theologie) and Philosophy of Religion. The theology of reason is concerned with the exegesis of the scriptures and the exposition of Christian symbols; philosophy is concerned with pure reason. Truth or reason is a unity and so philosophy is not in opposition to positive religion. Thus,

" The expression that God as reason rules the world, would be irrational if we did not assume that it has reference also to religion, and that the Divine Spirit works in the special character and form assumed by religion."⁶⁵

Religion differs from metaphysical speculation in that its attitude is expressed in symbolic rather than conceptual form. Hegel claims that religion itself is knowledge of God⁶⁶, but this does not constitute a proof of the existence of God. Religion essentially involves feeling and while feeling may give subjective certainty it does not confer intellectual certainty. Nevertheless such religious knowledge is a reflection of the Absolute and therefore offers truth. In their own way the proofs of the existence of God also offer truth but this is philosophical truth. John Baillie, who in his Gifford lectures examined the authority of religious experience, well expressed

Hegel's distinction between religion and philosophy.

" He (Hegel) believes that the religious mind operates, not by means of Begriffe, exact concepts or notions, but by means of imaginative representations or Vorstellungen. Religion is picture-thinking, which means that it is thinking of super-sensible reality in terms of sensible things, and of the invisible in terms of the visible. Philosophy, on the other hand, can offer us adequate knowledge of the super-sensible realm, which to him is the realm of reality as distinct from appearance, because Begriffe are its natural currency."⁶⁷

We might say then that in the Hegelian scheme metaphysical speculation does yield a natural theology which offers truth about God whereas religion yields partial and symbolic truth.

In this way Hegel did much to re-instate the arguments for the existence of God. As we have seen, the early Gifford lecturers were for the most part Hegelian in their outlook and this is nowhere more clearly illustrated than in the following passage from Stirling :

" There is a triplet of perpetual appearance and reappearance in the ancient Fathers of the Church. It is esse, vivere, intelligere; and these are but three successive stages of the world itself. To live is to be above to be, and to think is to be above to live. All three are at once in the world; and though they offer hands, as it were, each to the other, each is for itself. So it is that the Three Proofs are but the single wave in the rise of the soul, through the Trinity of the Universe, up to the unity of God. And, with such thoughts before

us, it will be found that the ontological proof will assume something of reality, and will cease to be a mere matter of words. The very thought of God is of that which is, and cannot not-be."⁶⁸

Nevertheless even Stirling recognised that the ontological argument is not logically verifiable but is rather a "mood of the mind, a veritable process of the soul, a movement of spirit to spirit, and a revelation of God to man."⁶⁹

Philosophy, for Hegel, is indeed religion as he himself acknowledged.⁷⁰ Christianity, as the Absolute Religion, states the same truths as Hegelian philosophy, or so Hegel believed. Thus it does not much matter whether we say that Christianity is the religious manifestation of Hegelian philosophy or that Hegelian philosophy is Christianity in conceptual form. But what we have when Hegel has finished is not the traditional Christian faith, but the Christian faith adapted to Hegelian thought forms. Philosophy and Christianity may be partners once more in Hegelian thought but there is little doubt as to which partner is the senior. In his History of Philosophy Copleston comments:

" Hegel makes speculative philosophy the final arbiter of the inner meaning of Christian revelation. Absolute idealism is presented as esoteric Christianity and Christianity as esoteric Hegelianism; and the mystery insisted on by theology is subordinated to a philosophical clarification which amounts in fact to a transformation."⁷¹

Some of the early Gifford lecturers attempted to show that

Hegelian philosophy provided a metaphysical system within which Christianity could be understood. There are dangers in too close an identification for while a man may think about an Absolute Synthesis, to use S.S.Laurie's phrase, he worships a living God. Natural theology as metaphysical speculation may help our understanding of religion but it must not become a substitute religion. That is not the intention of either metaphysics or natural theology.

8. Metaphysics in the Twentieth Century

The story of metaphysics in the twentieth century can be told, to a considerable extent, in terms of Gifford lecturers. Edward Caird, Henry Jones, Royce, Pringle-Pattison, Bosanquet and others offered their idealist metaphysics to a world impatient for a scientific realism. Sorley, Taylor and De Burgh followed Kant in seeking to establish a metaphysic of morals. Others, like Lloyd Morgan, Alexander and Whitehead made metaphysical ventures on the basis of realism. The outstanding attempt at a Christian metaphysic was, of course, William Temple's Nature, Man and God. Gilson represents contemporary Roman Catholic thought. A full account of twentieth century religious metaphysics is to be found in John Macquarrie's Twentieth Century Religious Thought (1963), which, of course, goes beyond the Gifford boundaries. It is interesting and impressive to note how frequently the names of Gifford lecturers appear in Macquarrie's account, and very often the Gifford appointment has provided a

the incentive for the production of a magnum opus.

The twentieth century will be remembered for its opposition to metaphysics, not that such opposition is anything new. Hume and Kant in the eighteenth century and Mill and Comte in the nineteenth raised questions which are fundamentally the same as those raised by the anti-metaphysicians of the present century. The difference lies in the fact that religious thinkers of the present century have taken the questions much more seriously than did their predecessors. At the beginning of the century G.E. Moore and Bertrand Russell were already challenging the validity of metaphysics. In his account of Hegel Russell castigates him for introducing metaphysical muddles into mathematics.⁷² Of the philosophers who have attempted to prove the existence of God, he says :

" In order to make their proofs seem valid, they have had to falsify logic, to make mathematics mystical, and to pretend that deep-seated prejudices were heaven-sent intuitions."⁷³

Philosophy had traditionally included metaphysics, psychology and logic. Psychology was rightly transferred to the realm of science; metaphysics was relegated to the sphere of poetry; logic was left in sole possession of the philosophical field. A.J.Ayer's Language, Truth and Logic (1936) provided the clearest expression of the new positivism in Britain and in that work Ayer denied the very possibility of metaphysics.

" We may . . . define a metaphysical sentence as a sentence which purports to express a genuine proposition, but does,

in fact, express neither a tautology nor an empirical hypothesis. And as tautologies and empirical hypotheses form the entire class of significant propositions, we are justified in concluding that all metaphysical assertions are nonsensical."⁷⁶

And further,

" We shall maintain that no statement which refers to a 'reality' transcending the limits of all possible sense-experience can possibly have any literal significance; from which it must follow that the labours of those who have striven to describe such a reality have all been devoted to the production of nonsense."⁷⁷

For Ayer the whole class of true propositions is composed of scientific and philosophical propositions. These cannot contradict each other for science is reporting on empirical facts and philosophy merely provides the rules for such reporting; indeed philosophy is little more than the logic of science. If the scientist goes beyond his science into the realm of metaphysics, as some Gifford lecturers have done, then Ayer would say that the scientist is talking nonsense the moment he crosses the border. Moral philosophy and theology come under the same condemnation as metaphysics. Natural theology, our 'sick man of Europe' is not even mentioned by name in Ayer's criticism, perhaps on the grounds that one doesn't speak ill of the dead and only of the dying in whispers!

Metaphysics and natural theology are strangely resilient. The argument of Language, Truth and Logic has been answered in

various ways by Gifford lecturers. John Laird was one of the earliest Gifford protagonists in the defence of metaphysics against the new positivism. He declared his readiness to be "accused of rashness, vacuity, obstinacy and other forms of wrongheadedness"⁷⁸ in his defence of metaphysics. In speaking of his conclusions Laird confessed that there was even more in metaphysics than he had thought.

" I may say that I did not appreciate the force of theism when I began this enquiry. I was comforted by the recollection that Lord Gifford expressly permitted a lecturer on this foundation to be a sceptic and freethinker. I hoped to be able to avoid pulpit theism and soap-box atheism. (I may add the irrelevance that I dislike both.) I may even have thought that theism was a decrepit metaphysical vehicle harnessed to poetry. I do not think so now."⁷⁹

Laird does not claim that metaphysical speculation yields verifiable truth but suggests that there are indeed degrees of plausibility between 'nonsense' and verifiable propositions. H.J.Paton dealt at some length with the linguistic veto and, while he recognised that the challenge of logical positivism and linguistic analysis had been salutary for religious thought, he described the positivist ban on metaphysics as a road sign marked 'slow' rather than 'halt'.⁸⁰ More recently C.A.Campbell⁸¹, quoting a student who had declared in an examination paper that 'metaphysics' had become a swear word, makes no apology if his lectures are bristling with bad language! Campbell believes that there is a sense in which religious statements can be described

as true and sets out to demonstrate the relevance of such statements.

If the statement 'God exists' is nonsense then the statement 'God does not exist' is equally nonsense. Intuitions and insights may not yield verifiable propositions, but it is an empirical fact that men and women have had intuitions and insights and it is not unreasonable to suppose that they will go on having them. It is all to the good that there should be warning notices raised here and there by the logicians so that we can distinguish between faith and knowledge, intuition and scientific statement. We need a word to describe man's thoughts about the ultimate nature of the universe, based on his scientific knowledge and any truth afforded by insight or intuition, and metaphysics is as good a word as any. If such speculation involves discussion of the existence and nature of God the natural theology is a legitimate term.

Part 2. Chapter 3.

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Chapter Four

Natural Theology as the Ally of Faith

1	Philosophy and Faith	page 316
2	Nisi Credideritis Non Intelligetis	319
3	The Changing Relationship pf Faith and Reason	327
4	The Uneasy Partnership of Faith and Reason	331
5	Faith and Reason in Reformation Thought	333
6	Natural Theology and the Existentialists	340
7	Post-Liberal Theology	342
8	Natural Theology in Modern Catholic Thought	344
	Reference Notes	349

1. Philosophy and Faith

St. Paul was not only an apologist who was prepared to use philosophical argument to persuade unbelievers; he presented the gospel as a philosophy - a new kind of wisdom. Philosophy is more than an aid to the unbeliever in his search for faith; it is an aid to the believer in understanding his own faith. The faith preached by Paul was something for which Greek philosophy might serve as introduction but never a substitute. First and foremost St. Paul was an expositor of this new kind of wisdom. The relationship between faith and philosophy was succinctly described by Gilson when he wrote of the apostle :

" He knows nothing, he preaches nothing, save Jesus Christ crucified and the redemption of sinners by His grace. It would be altogether absurd therefore to speak of a philosophy of St. Paul, and if we find certain fragments of Greek philosophy embedded in his writings these are either wholly adventitious, or, more often, integrated with a religious synthesis which transforms their meaning altogether. The Christianity of St. Paul is not a philosophy added to other philosophies, it is a religion which supersedes all that is ordinarily called philosophy and absolves us from the trouble of seeking one. For Christianity is a way of salvation, and therefore something other than, and more than a scheme of knowledge."¹

The gospel was neither an appeal for moral rectitude nor the provision of a philosophy. Hence it was a stumbling block to the law-respecting Jew and the truth-seeking Greek. Salvation by grace through faith was offered to both alike. The wisdom of the wise and the cleverness of the clever were cancelled out by the

gospel.² Yet although St. Paul described the gospel as foolishness, within a sentence or two, he described it as a new kind of wisdom, -

" a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification."³

It looks, at first sight, as if St. Paul was content to dispense with Greek philosophy, offering a short cut to wisdom, which could be obtained by faith in Jesus Christ rather than by the laborious toils of philosophy. Yet the man who is by nature a philosopher will not be satisfied with such a ready made faith, unless it can give satisfactory answers to the questions he has been asking. In other words, he has sought the meaning of life through philosophy and has not found it, but once he has accepted the wisdom of God by faith, the meaning of life becomes plain. In believing he understands. So, as we have seen, Justin described his new found faith as a philosophy and thereafter described himself as a philosopher. So too with St. Paul; once he had made the initial act of surrender on the Damascus road, the answer to other problems became clear. The letter to the Romans, for instance, provides an interpretation of history and answers to the problems of suffering and providence, answers which would not make sense apart from the initial act of faith.

At this point it will be well to distinguish between two radically different conceptions of faith. What has been called the "propositional" view, a view that dominated the mediaeval period, is that by revelation a body of truth has been made

known and faith consists in the acceptance of this truth. Faith, according to the Vatican Council of 1870, is "a supernatural virtue, whereby, inspired and assisted by the grace of God, we believe that the things which he has revealed are true". Faith is thus intellectual assent. Nor is this view confined to Roman Catholicism. For certain protestants faith has implied an intellectual assent to the scriptures as revealed truth. Yet when faith is described in the scriptures it is always more than intellectual assent to revealed truth. When Abraham left his kindred he was doing more than assenting to a monotheistic conception of God. When Moses heard the voice of God by the burning bush he was not merely giving assent to the proposition that the nature of God is pure Being. Similarly faith for St. Paul was more than an acceptance of the theology expressed in his letter to the Romans. Faith, in these instances, is the outcome of an I-Thou confrontation with God.

We have then two interpretations of faith :

- (1) Faith as the acceptance of a direct revelation from God, often recorded in the form of a vision, and
- (2) Faith as acceptance, on the authority of church or scripture, of truths revealed to individuals or councils. This second kind of faith is our main concern in this chapter. Faith, involving direct intuition of God, will concern us in the chapter immediately following.

The man of faith, in the second sense, is still an intelligent creature, called to love God with all his mind. So

the believer for his own satisfaction seeks a rational exposition of the faith he holds, but it is still a faith. There is no salvation by correct deduction and if a man argues from faith he cannot reach any more than faith; he can only make his faith more explicit. Faith may thus be strengthened by the examination of reason, but it is not the product of reason. Furthermore faith, strengthened by reason, provides a standard by which a man lives. Gilson, in commenting on Lactantius, contrasts the philosopher, who depends on nothing but his own reason, and the Christian philosopher whose faith provides him with "a criterion, a norm of judgment, a principle of discernment and selection".⁴ The peculiar contribution of Lactantius lay in his bringing together wisdom and faith; he chose the certitude of reason directed by revelation in preference to unguided reason. Indeed early Christian thinkers argued against Greek thought on the ground of the "contradictions" of the philosophers. The Greeks had discovered snippets of truth but their truth could only be recognised in the light of revelation.⁵

2. Nisi Credideritis Non Intelligetis

The Latin translation from the Septuagint of the line from Isaiah⁶ may not reflect the true meaning of the Hebrew, but it became a guiding principle for St. Augustine in his consideration of the relationship between faith and reason. The Manichean teaching appealed to the unconverted Augustine simply because

it offered him a way to truth by reason without any appeal to faith. Later, what has been described as "the amiable scepticism" of Cicero, made a similar appeal and then the teaching of Plotinus. Finally he discovered that all that was worth while in neoplatonism was already contained in Christian teaching in the Gospel of John and the Book of Wisdom.

" Thus," says Gilson, " the philosophy he vainly sought by reason was offered him by faith. Those all too uncertain truths which Greek speculation reserved for an intellectual élite, had already been brought together, purified, justified, completed by a revelation which put them within reach of all the world."⁷

Faith now became the yardstick by which St. Augustine measured the findings of the philosophers. St. Thomas tells us⁸ that whenever Augustine found anything consistent with faith in the teaching of the Platonists he adopted it, but he amended their teaching when it was not in accordance with faith. So for Augustine, who owed so much to non-Christian philosophy, faith was primary. His reason was not nullified by his faith, but rendered his faith comprehensible. While reason could not establish faith it might show faith to be not unreasonable.

Johannes Scotus Erigena, who accepted the same Latin mistranslation of Isaiah and likewise insisted on the primacy of faith, used the story of the approach of Peter and John to the empty tomb as symbol of the approach through faith and reason respectively. Both the disciples ran to the tomb but Peter, representing faith, entered first and John, representing

reason, followed.⁹ We accept the truths of God by faith and then bring our powers of reason to bear upon them. This exercise leads us to two kinds of theology. If we accept the truths given by revelation and then draw inferences from them we are led into the realm of dogmatic theology or theology proper. If we accept the truths given through faith and then reason about them as far as we can without reliance upon revelation then we arrive at the kind of natural theology pursued by St. Anselm. It is to St. Anselm that we owe the most fully elaborated formulation of the principle of the primacy of faith. For the Christian, faith is the given point of departure. If he does not put faith first, then, according to Anselm, he is presumptuous. On the other hand if he does not bring reason to bear on his faith he is negligent.

" While the right order requires that we should believe the deep things of the Christian faith before we undertake to discuss them by reason, it seems careless for us, once we are established in the faith, not to aim at understanding what we believe."¹⁰

Even though St. Anselm described his ontological argument as a short way with unbelievers it was produced first at the request of some of the monks at Bec who asked for a model of meditation on the existence and essence of God based on reason.¹¹ As the monks themselves were believers it was indeed fides quaerens intellectum, i.e., the faithful bringing reason to bear on the object of their faith. The possibility of demonstrating the

existence of God apart from faith does not seem to have entered the mind of St. Anselm, who lived before the rediscovery of Aristotle and for whom the later distinction between natural and revealed theology did not exist.

In the Monologium St. Anselm had presented three traditional proofs of God's existence based on empirical experience. First of all what is experienced as good is more or less good, which is another way of saying that it participates in absolute goodness, which is God. Secondly, Anselm presented the argument concluding in a first cause. Thirdly, he argued that relative degrees of perfection point to a being more perfect than the rest, namely God. It is clear that these are not really proofs of the existence of God and it is doubtful whether Anselm thought they were. But it is ^{also} clear that once the being of God is accepted by faith such rational argument supports faith.

In the Proslogion St. Anselm described how he began to question with himself whether there might not be found a single argument which would be self-sufficient and all-sufficient. He tells us that the ontological argument came to him quite suddenly. It has the advantage that it does not depend in the least upon empirical experience but solely upon the idea of God, whom he addresses in the second person. The argument can only be understood in the context of this I-Thou relationship. The argument runs as follows :

" And so, O Lord, since thou givest understanding to faith, give me to understand - as far as thou knowest it to be good for me - that thou dost exist, as we believe, and that thou art what we believe thee to be. Now we believe that thou art a being than which none greater can be thought. Or can it be that there is no such being, since "the fool hath said in his heart, 'There is no God' "? But when this same fool hears what I am saying - "A being than which none greater can be thought" - he understands what he hears, and what he understands is in his understanding, even if he does not understand that it exists. . . Even the fool, then, must be convinced that a being than which none greater can be thought exists at least in his understanding. But clearly that than which a greater cannot be thought cannot exist in the understanding alone. For if it is actually in the understanding alone, it can be thought of as existing also in reality, and this is greater. Therefore, if that than which a greater cannot be thought is in the understanding alone, this same thing than which a greater cannot be thought is that than which a greater can be thought. But obviously this is impossible. Without doubt, therefore, there exists both in the understanding and in reality, something than which a greater cannot be thought."¹²

Kant's criticism is well known and need not be repeated.

According to Karl Barth the argument is nothing more than a statement of faith and Anselm is essentially a theologian. The Proslogion is described by Barth as a study of the implications of the divine Name rather than a proof of God's existence.¹³

Barth's judgment is summed up in the following comment :

" The aim of theology cannot be to lead men to faith, nor to confirm them in the faith, nor even to deliver their faith from doubt. Neither does the man who asks theological questions ask them for the sake of the existence of his faith; his theological answers, however complete they may be, can have no bearing on the existence of his faith."¹⁴

If Barth's interpretation is correct it is difficult to see how Anselm could have thought that his argument would be a short way with unbelievers. Barth may be right as far as unqualified theology is concerned, But Anselm seems to have thought that he was indeed stretching out beyond faith to rational argument, to what would later be described as natural theology. Others have described Anselm's work as mystical theology¹⁵, but St. Anselm's quest was essentially rational rather than mystical. His argument is the explication of a concept of God rather than an experience of God.

Perhaps the best way of expressing Anselm's position is to say that he accepted God's existence by faith and then proceeded to show that it would in fact be illogical to believe anything else. Later Aquinas would assert explicitly that there can be no contradiction between the data of faith and the findings of reason. Anselm assumed, without saying so explicitly, that what he accepted by faith must be amenable to logical demonstration. It could be, however, that the ontological argument is just another way of saying that the person who believes in God cannot possibly think of God as not existing.

If the unbeliever attempts to reach Anselm's conclusion on the basis of an experimental hypothesis the only proposition he reaches is, "If God is that than which no greater can be conceived then God exists." It is faith that gives certainty to the argument. Its weakness is seen when it is judged purely as a dialectical exercise. Aquinas, Locke and Kant saw this weakness, yet Descartes, Leibniz and Hegel saw truth in it. Gilson comments :

" What all those who accepted it have in common is the identification of real existence with intelligible being conceived by thought; what all those who condemn its principle have in common is the refusal to consider any problem of existence aside from an empirically given existent."¹⁶

The abiding strength of Anselm's position is that he saw faith as something that could be made explicit by reason and never is this more clearly demonstrated than in the ontological argument. If God is believed in and conceived as Being then he necessarily exists. As the first Gifford lecturer at Edinburgh put it, for Anselm "the thought of God means the being of God".¹⁷ So Anselm cries out :

" Thanks be to thee, good Lord, thanks be to thee, because I now understand by thy light what I formerly believed by thy gift, so that even if I were to refuse to believe in thy existence, I could not fail to understand its truth."¹⁸

And later :

" Thou alone, therefore, O Lord, art what thou art and thou art he who is."¹⁹

An examination of Cur Deus Homo? confirms the judgment we have made of Anselm's view of the faith-reason relationship. The first book, he tells us,

" contains the objections of unbelievers who reject the Christian faith because they regard it as contrary to reason, along with the answers of believers. It ends by proving by necessary reasons (Christ being put out of sight, as if nothing had ever been known of him) that it is impossible for a man to be saved without him."²⁰

In commenting on the enquiries he receives Anselm writes of the enquirers :

" They do not expect to come to faith through reason, but they hope to be gladdened by the contemplation and the understanding of the things they believe."²¹

In obedience to the scriptural command the Christian is to be ready to give an answer for the hope that is in him. Yet the answer turns out to be no more than a demonstration of the reasonableness of the Christian faith. "Everything you say," confesses Boso, the questioner in the dialogue, "seems reasonable to me, and I cannot gainsay it."²³ And Anselm's final word confirms the primacy of faith :

" If we have said anything that should be corrected, I do not refuse correction, if it is done with good reason. But if what we think we have discovered by reason is confirmed by the testimony of the truth, we should ascribe this not to ourselves, but to God who is blessed for ever. Amen."²⁴

It is clear from this comment that the revealed truth of God is the final standard and if anything is at fault it must be the

reasoning of Anselm rather than the record of the revelation. This testifies to the humility of Anselm, but it is not favourable to the establishment of an independent natural theology. Anselm saw that faith was integral to religion and that it is impossible to speculate about truths of religion in vacuo. The "natural" theology of St. Anselm consists in the attempt to demonstrate the reasonableness of faith as far as possible without resort to revelation but the final authority is revelation rather than reason.

3. The Changing Relationship of Faith and Reason

In religious thought after the time of St. Augustine there is discernible a gradual transition from the idea of faith as immediate personal experience, to faith as the acceptance of revelation and finally to faith as the acceptance of the external authority of the church expressed in scripture or credal statements. With the rediscovery of Aristotle in the thirteenth century a further development took place. Augustine had derived consciousness of God from self-consciousness. Anselm had argued from his personal apprehension of God. Now attention was diverted to the external world and Aquinas made a completely new approach to natural theology. There was a knowledge of God to be gained independently of faith. However, the Augustinian approach still had its champions and St. Bonaventure claimed that there could be no such thing as autonomous knowledge of the created world.

" The human reason cannot reach a full and final

explanation of created things unless it is aided by an understanding of the most pure, actual, complete and absolute Being, in other words, unless it reaches out to the utterly simple and eternal Being of God in whose mind are to be found the ultimate ground and reason of all things."²⁵

For Bonaventure as for Augustine and Anselm before him all reasoning about religion begins with faith. Theology is the believable translated into the intelligible by the process of reasoning.²⁶ Similarly Duns Scotus, in spite of the synthesis offered by Aquinas, did all his philosophising on the basis of faith, and at the outset offered this truly Augustinian prayer:

" O Lord, our God, when Moses asked of Thee as a most true Doctor, by what name he should name Thee to the people of Israel; knowing well what mortal understanding conceive of Thee and unveiling to him Thy ever blessed name, Thou didst reply : Ego sum qui sum; wherefore art Thou true Being, total Being. This I believe, but if it be in any wise possible this I would also know. Help me, O Lord, to seek out such knowledge of the true being that Thou art as may lie within the power of my natural reason, starting from that being which Thou Thyself hast attributed to Thyself."²⁷

Where Aquinas set out to prove that the being of God was a necessary truth Duns Scotus accepted the truth as a gift of faith. Aquinas too accepted the revelation vouchsafed to Moses as yielding truth but he also claimed that his proof of the necessary being of God yielded valid knowledge of God.

The Thomist distinction between theology and philosophy is succinctly stated by Gilson in his opening Gifford lecture:

" In Thomism . . . Theology remains in its proper place, that is to say at the head of the hierarchy of the sciences; based on divine revelation, from which it receives its principles, it constitutes a distinct science starting from faith and turning to reason only to draw out the content of faith or to protect it from error. Philosophy, doubtless, is subordinate to theology, but, as philosophy, it depends on nothing but its own proper method; based on human reason, owing all its truth to the self-evidence of its principles and the accuracy of its deductions, it reaches an accord with faith spontaneously and without having to deviate in any way from its own proper path."²⁸

The true Thomist would not fall into what Gilson describes as the unpardonable error of a St. Augustine or a St. Anselm and ask us to believe in God as a prerequisite of providing us with a proof. But Augustine and Anselm lived in times when the existence of God was for the most part unchallenged and the believer was trying to understand his own faith. Aquinas lived at a time when Christians and non-Christians were making new ventures of thought and the Christian thinker was on the defensive in a way in which he had not been since the earliest days of the faith. As we have seen the need for apologetic forced St. Thomas to invent reasoned arguments for the faith, but he also saw the possibility of metaphysical speculation independent of faith, a metaphysic very much after the pattern of Aristotle's.

According to Aquinas, then, natural theology can give us a knowledge of the existence of God and some knowledge, largely

negative, of the nature of God. It is sufficient to confute unbelievers, but not adequate to lead them to the fullness of the Christian faith.

" The sole way to overcome an adversary of divine truth is from the authority of scripture - an authority divinely confirmed by miracles."²⁹

As far as this kind of truth is concerned Aquinas is at one with Anselm for he tells us that faith propounds and reason investigates.³⁰ Similarly in the Summa Theologica we are told:

" Sacred doctrine makes use even of human reason, not, indeed, to prove faith (for thereby the merit of faith would come to an end), but to make clear other things that are put forward in this doctrine. Since therefore grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it, natural reason should minister to faith as the natural bent of the will ministers to charity."³¹

There is, of course, the third kind of knowledge, described by Aquinas as the thunder of God's greatness in contrast to the knowledge of faith - 'a little drop of His word'.³² This third kind of knowledge is not to be accepted without the confirmation of scripture and is in any case the experience of the privileged few. One cannot but admire the neatness of the Thomist scheme, which allows for scriptural authority, mystical insight and rational argument together with an over-all faith that there can be no contradiction. Furthermore in any case of doubtful argument, dubious interpretation of scripture or questionable 'revelation' the Church is the final arbiter. Since few people have mystical experiences and comparatively few have the

intellectual ability to follow the dialectics of natural theology and the correct interpretation of scripture is notoriously difficult for the unlearned the vast majority will depend on the authority of the Church. For most people, according to the Thomist scheme, faith is an act of will, an act of obedience to an external authority. Where for St. Augustine faith was a commitment of the total person as a result of the inner experience of conversion, for Aquinas it became obedience to an external authority with the possibility that a select few might reason their way through towards faith or find the confirmation offered by religious insight.

It is significant that, whether we describe natural theology as apologetic, as metaphysics or as ally of faith, St. Thomas claims a prominent place in the account. As John Watson remarks, Aquinas combines in his total thought "reason and faith, philosophy and religion, rationalism and a mystical intuition".³³ Where Thomas synthesised the approaches through faith and reason, later thinkers separated them. The rationalist philosophers dispensed with faith; the positivist theologians saw the danger of giving any place to reason in man's reaching for God.

4. The Uneasy Partnership of Faith and Reason

The partnership of faith and reason established by Aquinas proved to be an uneasy one. It is true that faith was the senior partner and had the casting vote in any matter of controversy. The problems of such a partnership had already

been seen by Tertullian when he asked rhetorically what Jerusalem and Athens could ever have in common. It is the way of reason to go on asking questions; it is the way of faith to assert rather than argue. So the very neat deeds of partnership devised by St. Thomas proved unworkable. The junior partner, in the form of modern philosophy, attempted to establish his own business. This led to a natural theology completely divorced from faith and to the attempt to establish a religion within the bounds of mere reason. The understandable reaction of the senior partner was that he should run the business on his own; if the junior partner was to be offered re-employment it would be in the capacity of junior clerk with some little responsibility inside the firm but with no executive authority.

Some thinkers considered that Aquinas had gone too far in allowing so much independence to reason, and we have noted how Bonaventure and Duns Scotus attempted to restore the balance. William of Ockham marks the end of the golden age of scholasticism. He declared that only by faith is it possible to know the existence of God. It is possible by reasoned argument to reach probabilities, but probabilities are not the same as faith, and no strength of probability can lead to faith. Probability is the concern of rational argument; faith is something very different. Ockham believed that it was possible to prove the existence of a first cause, but this is not God in the religious sense. He thus undermined all the natural theology of his predecessors. He believed moreover that theology cannot be

described as a science, for it depends on faith and a science must depend on empirical facts. As Gilson put it,

" Faith was intact, but to follow Ockham was to give up any hope of achieving, in this life, a positive philosophical understanding of its intelligible meaning."³⁴

Ockham is thus the fore-runner of the Reformation thinkers.

5. Faith and Reason in Reformation Thought

In his emphasis on the primacy of faith Ockham was returning to Augustine, who had first posed the problem for mediaeval thought. Luther and Calvin were also returning to Augustine. As Gwatkin comments of Augustine,

" One part of his capacious mind fixed the ruling ideas of the Middle Ages, while another set the problems of the Reformation."³⁵

Luther believed that some knowledge of God is possible apart from faith, and, as we have seen³⁶, accepted the scholastic distinction that we can know quod sit deus but not quid sit deus. Any attempt to discover the nature of God through natural theology is fraught with the danger of idolatry. A man is saved by grace through faith. Further, this faith is not to be interpreted in any propositional sense; it is faith in God mediated through Christ. Where St. Thomas had attempted to bring together nature and grace, reason and revelation and the world and God, Luther stressed their separation. In his concluding lecture Otto Pflleiderer wrote :

" To Luther . . . faith is . . . the religious possession

of salvation. It connects man with God, frees him from human mediators and means, and makes him immediately certain within of his salvation. . . Luther saw the divine grace, not as conjoined with the Church and its means of salvation, but only with Christ and His Gospel."³⁷

Luther himself described faith as "a divine work in us which transforms us and bears us anew out of God", and as "a living trust in God's grace".³⁸ In so far as this faith is mediated it is mediated through Holy Scripture, but the faith is in God through Christ, not in Holy Scripture. Nor can Luther be accused of accepting the scriptures uncritically, for his careful comments on the epistles of St. Paul testify to an assiduity equal to that of any of the Scholastics in their comments on the Fathers. He was ready to distinguish between the Epistle to the Romans, the bulwark of his gospel, and the Epistle of St. James, that "epistle of straw". According to Aquinas the truth of the scriptures was confirmed by miracles. While Luther does not deny the miracles he declares that,

" External miracles are the apples and nuts which God gave to the childish world as playthings; we no longer have any need of them."³⁹

Scripture shines as truth in its own light. Luther was prepared to use reason within the realm of scriptural interpretation but it was a redeemed reason. For man to presume to discover the truths of God by the exercise of reason alone was anathema. When reason protests against the rigidity of the new faith it is ascribed to the agency of the devil.

The Scholastics were roundly condemned for their emphasis on reason and their exaltation of Aristotle. In the Disputation against Scholastic Theology, Luther declared :

" It is a wrong thing to say that a man cannot become a theologian without Aristotle. The truth is that a man cannot become a theologian unless he becomes one without Aristotle."⁴⁰

This is one of the milder comments on Aristotle. B.A.Gerrish, in Grace and Reason,⁴¹ has gathered together a few of the epithets applied by Luther to Aristotle, who is variously, "the stinking philosopher", "the Clown of the High Schools", "trickster", "rascal", "liar and knave", "the pagan beast", "blind pagan", "lazy ass" and "Billy-goat". Luther, we gather, was not over fond of Aristotle, whom he saw as the personification of man's attempt to reach God by the works of reason. It would be untrue to say that Luther had no place for reason and Gerrish points out⁴² three different ways in which Luther speaks of reason :

(1) There is natural reason which has its own proper domain. We can use such reasoning in science and mathematics.

(2) There is arrogant reason, trespassing on the domain of faith. It is for this type of reason that Luther reserves his most bitter attacks. This arrogant reason is "the Devil's whore" and the enemy of God.

(3) There is a regenerate reason serving humbly in the household of faith. This kind of reasoning is useful in the exegesis of scripture.

This threefold distinction helps us to understand not only Luther and Calvin but also the modern counterpart, Karl Barth. There is no out and out denial of reason, but only the denial of any possibility of reaching knowledge of God by human reason. Philosophy, for Luther, is the heathen theology of reason.⁴³ There is no way to God through such natural theology.

Calvin made a similar distinction between the types of reasoning open to man. Like Luther, he believed that reason is a gift of God to be used in the conduct of the ordinary affairs of life. It is efficient for the pursuit of mechanical arts and liberal studies.⁴⁴ It can even recognise the existence of God, and this, so that man should have no excuse, but it cannot go beyond quod sit deus to quid sit deus.

" To the great truths, What God is in himself, and what he is in relation to us, human reason makes not the least approach."⁴⁵

While not so virulent as Luther in his attacks on the philosophers, Calvin criticised them for their assumption that reason can answer all questions. In the search for God reason is impotent.

" As the human mind is unable, from dulness, to pursue the right path of investigation, and after various wanderings, stumbles every now and then like one groping in darkness, at length gets completely bewildered, so its whole procedure proves how unfit it is to search the truth and find it."⁴⁶

Indeed, the wisdom of the world, far from helping in the search, is a kind of veil which prevents the mind beholding God.⁴⁷ All true wisdom and revelation is the gift of God,

according to Calvin. Once the gift has been received the understanding is enlightened with a new knowledge. This knowledge of God which brings salvation is entirely different in quality from that which takes away excuse.⁴⁸ Reason was deemed a queen by the heathen but she had been effectively dethroned by St. Paul. The mind is corrupt and must be renewed as well as the heart.⁴⁹ Once the mind is renewed then it is enabled to grasp the truths offered by scripture, which is its own evidence.

Barth, as we have seen, denied all possibility of natural theology. The Confessio Scotica, on which he based his Gifford lectures, begins with the words,

" We confesse and acknowledge ane onelie God."

Barth points out that the Confession does not conceive its object at all but it acknowledges one only God.⁵⁰ The revelation is made by God and man can only acknowledge the one and only God; it is not something a man learns by his own efforts. St. Paul said that there are gods many and lords many⁵¹ but he was using the term figuratively. Men make gods of human ideologies, mythologies and philosophies, but these are false religions. Barth is at one with Luther and Calvin when he declares, albeit in a parenthesis:

" Universities are the temples of these religions."⁵²

Faith knowledge, in that it comes from revelation, is different from the knowledge derived from books or universities. Even the

question, "Who is God?" is not one that man thought of for himself.

" On the contrary, on every occasion that he raises it in earnest, he is compelled to raise it, because without his ever coming to think of it of his own accord, this question is put to him in such a way that it must be faced and cannot be evaded."⁵³

But of course the question had been asked many times before, particularly by the Greeks, and the Greek philosophers devised the very terms used in the Confessio Scotica, namely, "eternal, infinite, unmeasurable, incomprehensible, omnipotent, invisible". Barth answers this objection by explaining that we draw the meaning of these terms from our knowledge of God, not our knowledge of God from the words. The revelation is the revelation of a hidden God. The fitting humility of the believer before revealed mystery is set against scepticism, which, in contrast, is the human answer to the human question. Similarly the Majesty of God is not to be measured by the human idea of the Absolute, which is nothing more than "the reflection of the world, and in the end the disastrous reflection of human personality".⁵⁴ In the same way if we follow the traditional paths of the via negativa, the via eminentiae or the via causalitatis we may well conclude, "God is nothing", "God is everything", or "God is the One in everything". "And with it all," adds Barth, "what we have defined would not be God."⁵⁵

Aquinas, as we have seen, found no difficulty in identifying the conclusion of his various arguments with the God of religious experience, but Barth denies that there can be any relationship at all between man's concept of the First Cause or Prime Mover and the Majestic God of the Confessio Scotica. Finally God is not the God of human conception in any sense, yet even Barth must use the language of human personality to describe him.

" As a Person, in distinction from those images of our imagination, He is One Who knows and wills, who acts and speaks, Who as an "I" calls me "Thou" and Whom I can call "Thou" in return. This is the true name of God declared by Him Himself, and in which we must seek also the whole mystery of His majesty. Apart from this name it would have to remain completely hidden from us."⁵⁶

In this passage we see how close Barth is to existentialist thought. He repeatedly asserts that man can never find God as object. God as subject encounters man; he approaches as the "I am". Barth finds even in Luther and Calvin traces of a natural theology, "that is of a general view of the freedom of God based on one philosophical system or another,"⁵⁷ and he will have none of it. He declares :

" The true mystery of Predestination is neither the secular mystery of determinism nor the equally secular mystery of indeterminism, but the holy and real mystery of Jesus Christ."⁵⁸

Mystery is the operative word, a word of faith, a word the philosopher does not understand. Indeed the sentence just

quoted illustrates the difficulty of any possible dialogue between Barth and the natural theologian. Barth denies the right of the natural theologian to question his faith knowledge; there is thus no place for the natural theologian as critic. Even if natural theology could furnish apologetic it would not lead to true knowledge of God. As metaphysic natural theology is powerless to reach the God of mystery. In Barth we have the clearest expression of theological positivism, the logical conclusion of one strand of Augustinian thought.

6. Natural Theology and the Existentialists

In so far as any philosophical influence is discernible in the theology of Karl Barth it is Kierkegaardian existentialism. But for Barth it is not human despair that prepares the way for the acceptance of salvation. Everything in the drama of salvation is the work of the Sovereign God. However, for Kierkegaard, it was despair of human argument that led to the leap of faith. In Philosophical Fragments, Kierkegaard expresses this despair :

" I will surely not attempt to prove God's existence: and even if I began I would never finish, and would have to live constantly in suspense, lest something so terrible should suddenly happen that my bit of proof would be demolished."⁵⁹

Faith depends on something other than correct argument and Kierkegaard found that it was only when he let the proof go that he could know the existence of God.

" As long as I keep my hold on the proof, i.e. continue to demonstrate, the existence does not come out, if for no other reason than that I am engaged in proving it; but when I let the proof go, the existence is there. But this act of letting go is surely also something; it is indeed a contribution of mine. Must not this also be taken into account, this little moment, brief as it may be - it need not be long, for it is a leap?"⁶⁰

Kierkegaard's teaching is formative for much twentieth century philosophy and theology. His influence is discernible in the work of Kroner, Marcel, Niebuhr, Bultmann and Tillich among our Gifford lecturers. The question we must now ask is, How far can natural theology persist side by side with existentialism? The answer given Kroner, Niebuhr and Bultmann is fundamentally that of Barth. Natural theology has no part to play in bringing us to a knowledge of God. In one way or another we make a leap of faith, humbly recognising our inability to think straight about God. Tillich finds a place for natural theology even though he denies its ability to answer questions about God. Where Barth declares that man cannot even ask the question, 'Who is God?' in his own strength, Tillich allows that natural theology can frame the existential questions. The answers are given by revelatory events. This is the most that existentialism allows; natural theology can investigate the problem but can do no more. Faith is reached by a leap rather than a ladder.

7. Post-Liberal Theology

In spite of the onslaught of Luther and Calvin, natural theology survived both in the Roman Catholic Church and in Protestantism. It continued as the main instrument of apologetic and we have seen already how it led on the one hand to Deism and on the other to a somewhat formal Christianity strengthened by reasoned argument. Within Protestantism scientific method, applied to the study of religions and to the scriptures, led to liberalism, and some of the early Gifford lectures demonstrate the lengths to which liberalism led Christian philosophers.

The immediate result of Barthian theology was a new emphasis on the Bible and the authority of the Word. Natural theology was in danger of total eclipse. Among recent Gifford lecturers H.H. Farmer, John Baillie and Leonard Hodgson may be named as post-liberal theologians. They have seen the weaknesses of the older liberalism as well as the extravagances of the newer Biblical theology and find a place for natural theology which does not usurp the rightful place of revelation and yet contributes to the understanding of faith. In the early days of Barthian influence William Temple had protested that a revelation, however divine, must still satisfy conscience and reason. Even if there is a redemptive act man must be able to understand its purport if he is to distinguish between true religion and superstition.

" Whether in fact there is such a redemptive act, or what its mode, may be declared by positive religion; it is no question for the Natural Theologian. But Natural

Theology may very well enquire what its conditions must be if it is to satisfy the requirements of the problem as it has defined itself."⁶¹

This is not unlike Tillych's view, but for Temple natural theology not only poses the problem but reserves the right to criticise the revelatory answers.

John Baillie, while appreciating Barth's emphasis on the transcendence of God, believed that man possesses in himself something of worth that enables him to recognise the revelation of God. Man has, for Baillie, that knowledge of God which Calvin allowed and almost immediately disallowed and which Barth does not recognise at all. Yet even this natural theology depends ultimately on God himself, and all the proofs of the existence of God are merely arguments to support what man believes already.

"It is doubtful," says Baillie, "whether any race of men has ever believed that man could discover anything about God if God were not at the same time actively seeking to make himself known."⁶²

This means that natural theology is only natural as opposed to theology based on the special revelation of God in Christ.

H.H. Farmer saw Christianity as unique and formative for other religions by reason of the Incarnation, but, like Baillie, he finds room for a natural theology, which, while it may not prove the truths of religion, can nevertheless show them to be not unreasonable. Farmer does not quite say that natural theology only demonstrates what a man believes already, but

he recognises that the arguments only make their appeal because he is ready to be convinced. Farmer writes :

" If the reasonings of natural theology convince a man at all, they always draw some of their power to do so from the fact that something of natural religion or natural religio-theism is concomitantly active in his mind."⁶³

Similarly Leonard Hodgson claims that revelation and reason are complementary, being the divine and human sides in the dialogue between God and man.⁶⁴ This is a typically British response to Barthianism, a via media, which recognises the truth of the transcendence of God but also sees that there must be some human means, not totally inadequate or corrupt, whereby this transcendent God can be known.

8. Natural Theology in Modern Catholic Thought

It is usual to date the revival of interest in Thomism (and thereby in natural theology) from the Papal Encyclical of 1879 but it should be remembered that this only set the seal on a growing interest. The possibility of natural theology was always recognised by the Roman Catholic Church and in England of the nineteenth century Cardinal Newman clarified many of the issues involved. He enjoyed the advantage of St. Augustine in being a convert, not, of course, from paganism, but from what he came to regard as incomplete truth even as Augustine regarded neo-platonism as incomplete truth. Newman's analysis of belief is most relevant to our understanding of the function of natural theology. Newman realised some of the

limitations of natural theology, recognising that there was no easy way to the conversion of the unbeliever. He had little patience with the prevalent view that more widespread instruction in the arts and sciences would lead to more widespread religious conviction. In February, 1841, Newman wrote to The Times protesting against "a dangerous doctrine" maintained by Lord Brougham and Sir Robert Peel :

" That doctrine was to the effect that the claims of religion could be secured and sustained in the mass of men, and in particular in the lower classes of society, by acquaintance with literature and physical science, and that, through the instrumentality of Mechanics' Institutes and Reading Rooms, to the serious disparagement . . . of direct Christian instruction."⁶⁵

Later in the century Lord Gifford would attempt to reach the whole population of Scotland by means of the Gifford lectures, for which, if possible, there should be no admission charge, and which should be published in cheap form if the trustees so desired. Newman could have readily pointed out that the widespread diffusion of natural theology would not necessarily lead to a spread of religion.

Newman recognised that knowledge may be followed by reasoning, but the heart, which is involved in belief, is reached through the imagination rather than the reason. Religion is concerned with what he calls real assent. Notional assent is the acceptance of a theological proposition. It is possible to assert something without apprehension, but when

we assert with apprehension then we can be said to have given real assent. This assent is belief, which is described as the unconditional acceptance of a truth. We find in Newman something of later existentialism, when he declares :

" Life is for action. If we insist on proof for everything, we shall never come to action : to act you must assume, and that assumption is faith."⁶⁶

Nevertheless there is a place for natural theology and Newman argues from the experience of conscience, the desire in man for reconciliation with God, and the response awakened even in the mind of a child to the teaching of religion. A child has

" that within him which actually vibrates, responds and gives a deep meaning to the lessons of his first teachers about the will and the providence of God."⁶⁷

This is more than a notion of God; something clicks; God becomes real. Proofs of the existence of God may produce notional assent without real assent, but we never give real assent without notional assent. Religion cannot maintain its ground without theology. So natural theology can lead us towards notional assent, but real assent demands response of the whole person not to a neat syllogism but to the living God. Natural theology can lead to notional assent - to the factual existence of God; it cannot lead to a living faith. This is not neo-Thomism but it restates the distinctions made by Thomas.

It is unfortunate that Jacques Maritain was unable to lecture at Aberdeen in 1940 or to accept the renewed invitation after the war, for we might have had within the Gifford series an

exposition of the neo-Thomist position by one of the foremost of neo-Thomist philosophers. Etienne Gilson, another neo-Thomist, did much to revive the spirit of mediaeval philosophy in his historical review. Maritain's little book, Approaches to God, provides an outline, that might well have been developed into Gifford lectures. In it he gives clearly and concisely the neo-Thomist approach to the traditional Thomist arguments.

Maritain introduces his discussion of the Five Ways with an exposition of what he describes as "the Primordial Way of Approach". This is the way to God through the pre-philosophical knowledge described by St. Paul.⁶⁸ It is natural knowledge, says Maritain, but virtually metaphysical. One is reminded that Maritain was formerly a follower of Bergson, when he says :

" It involves a reasoning, but a reasoning after the fashion of an intuitive grasp, bathed in the primordial intuition of existence."⁶⁹

The Five Ways of St. Thomas are shown to be a developing and unfolding of this natural knowledge. We cannot speak about a 'proof' of the existence of God, for a proof renders evident what is not evident. Indeed, we do not need a proof; we only need to demonstrate the existence of God. Maritain goes on to develop a "Sixth Way" based on the consciousness of human existence, expressed briefly in a paragraph :

" I, who am thinking, have always existed, but not in myself or within the limits of my own personality - and not by an impersonal existence or life either (for

without personality there is no thought, and there must have been thought there, since it is now in me); therefore I have always existed by a suprapersonal existence or life. Where then? It must have been in a Being of transcendent personality, in whom all that there is of perfection in my thought and in all thought existed in a supereminent manner, and who was, in His own infinite Self, before I was, and is, now while I am, more I than I myself, who is eternal, and from whom I, the self which is thinking now, proceeded one day into temporal existence."⁷⁰

Here we are in the realm of intuition, mysticism and faith.

Neo-Thomist philosophers, like Maritain and Mascall, lead us beyond philosophy to the hope of a direct vision of God. Mascall likens the approach of philosophy to theology to the coming of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon. She came bringing all her own treasures but was awed into silence by the glory she saw.⁷¹ Maritain writes :

" Through the night of faith it is given us to attain in His inner life - on the testimony of His Word - the very God who will be intuitively grasped when faith gives way to vision. And in the intellect elevated to the life of faith, the natural desire to see God supernaturally becomes a desire which knows what it asks for - a knowledge of God through His essence, such as He gives Himself in His own uncreated light - and which from now on has in germ the wherewithal to attain what it asks for."⁷²

One can understand that this is a "Sixth Way" for Maritain, but it is a way of mysticism, based on an intuition of Being. The precise relationship between natural theology and mystical insight will be discussed in the next chapter.

Gabriel Marcel, another of the few Roman Catholic thinkers, in the Gifford lists, began his enquiry with the mystery of Being, the starting point for Aristotle and for so many Catholic thinkers. As we have seen, faith for Marcel is never the culmination of an argument; it is a matter of seeing through to the meaning of reality rather than logical inference. It remains for us to enquire whether this insight or intuition can be the basis of a natural theology or whether such insight is an elementary faith, which may provide a groundwork for Christian Philosophy rather than what has been traditionally known as natural theology.

Book IIChapter 4Reference Notes

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Chapter Five

Natural Theology and Mystical Insight

1	The Nature of Religious Insight	page 353
2	Mysticism and Revelation	356
3	Religious Insight in Platonic Thought	360
4	Christian Mysticism	368
5	The Later Influence of Mysticism	374
6	Mysticism and Philosophy	375
7	The New Stress on Feeling	378
8	Mystical Experience as discussed in Gifford Lectures	381
9	The Validity of Religious Insight	388
10	Religious Insight and Natural Theology	393
	Reference Notes	395

1. The Nature of Religious Insight

In tracing the development of natural theology the separation of natural theology from religion has been forced on our attention. It is clear that if natural theology consists in a critique of religious concepts then the two must be separate. In our discussion of natural theology as apologetic we found that at the end of the argument there was something missing. Natural theology does not make contact with religion and the seeker after faith must make a leap of faith at the end of the argument. Similarly metaphysical argument does not lead to religion unless something of a religious faith is introduced at some point in the process as with Hegelianism. In our discussion of natural theology as allied to faith we again saw that natural theology must begin with faith as in Anselm's thought or must at some point be supplemented by faith as in Thomist thought. In this final discussion we come upon a concept of natural theology which identifies it with religious insight. Christopher Dawson remarked :

" Religion does not arise from the experience of men like Archdeacon Paley, but from that of men like Ruysbroeck, and the thought of Ruysbroeck is more genuinely natural theology than the thought of Paley, even though it may be less communicable and less adapted to logical discussion."¹

And further :

" Natural Theology says not only look up and look out-

it also says look down and look in, and you will find proofs of the reality of God in the depths of your own nature . . . The men of religious experience - the saints and the sages - have always taught that the further man penetrates into the depth of his consciousness and of what lies below his consciousness, the nearer he approaches to spiritual reality."²

In coming to this concept of natural theology we have made full circle and are back with St. Paul on Mars Hill. If God is the one in whom we live and move and have our being, where else can we expect to find proof of God than in the depth of our own experience? Throughout the ages men of varied cultural and religious backgrounds have experienced what they took to be the reality of the divine so that it is possible to speak with some meaning of a "perennial philosophy", a kind of consensus gentium based on religious experience.

Christopher Dawson made the contrast between Paley and Ruysbroeck; he might just as well have contrasted Aristotle and Plato. The knowledge of God achieved by Aristotle is in the main the result of discursive reasoning while Plato's knowledge of God is the product of insight and reason. Bergson distinguished between knowledge of understanding and knowledge of intuition. The God of Aristotle is the conclusion of an argument, and, according to Bergson³, has nothing in common with the gods worshipped by the Greeks and little more in common with the God of the Bible. Real religion is dynamic and its source is mysticism. Bergson declared that mysticism

and religion are mutually cause and effect.⁴ T.H.Hughes, in a careful study of mysticism⁵, distinguished between the knowledge gained by reasoning and the knowledge gained by the mystic. They differ in three respects :

(1) The knowledge we attain by reasoning, e.g. mathematical truths, conforms to the laws of logic. There is something more than inference in the mystic's knowledge, though he may use logical reasoning to test it. Rational knowledge is inferential; intuitive knowledge is an immediate experience. This is something like Newman's distinction between notional and real assent.

(2) In the rational quest we are reaching out to achieve knowledge. The mystic has the experience of something being forced upon him from without, as when a picture presented from outside awakens an aesthetic response. This is why the Christian (and others use similar language) speaks of faith itself as a gift of God.

(3) In reasoning we attempt to rule out feeling and consider that we are better scientists if we eliminate feeling. In the grasping of intuitive knowledge there is a strong affective element.

Summing up, Hughes writes of intuitive knowledge :

" This is not reached by a process of reasoning. It seems to come to us in a flash, or better, we live through it. It is akin to the consciousness of life itself, closely related to the primal instincts of human nature; an experience rather than a bare

perception, and linked intimately to the feeling or affective aspect of consciousness."⁶

Many of the problems raised in Gifford lectures and in natural theology generally would be resolved if we could keep clearly before us the fact that in attempting to investigate truths of religion by means of logic and science we are using instruments only partially appropriate, even if they are the best instruments available. The expert who investigates the quality of the paint and the canvas may tell us important facts about an old Master but it will only be a partial account. A literary critic may miss the real meaning of a poem. Pascal was right in distinguishing between the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the God of the philosophers. The God of Aristotle we think about; the God of Abraham we worship. We could not pretend to be natural theologians in any sense if there were no such thing as religion. As Clement Webb put it :

" To try to prove the existence of God apart from religious experience is as great a mistake as it would be to hope to demonstrate the existence of Beauty apart from an aesthetic experience."⁷

2. Mysticism and Revelation

At the time of the writing of the early Gifford lectures the distinction between natural and revealed religion was patently clear. Christianity, Judaism and, to some extent, Mohammedanism were revealed religions. All the rest were the results of man's groping after God. If then it could be shown

that concepts of God acceptable to Christianity were to be found in other religions and no "borrowing" was evident, then the case for natural theology was made out. Natural theology would then consist of those propositions about God and reality discoverable by man's unaided reason or intuition. Christian theology would subsume these truths but would enjoy the fuller truth vouchsafed by revelation. Natural theology would be able to argue e consensu gentium while Christianity argued from revelation. This was the position adopted by lecturers like Max Muller and A.H.Sayce who traced back the roots of Christianity and Judaism to earlier religions.

If indeed God is a God who reveals himself rather than a passive Deity waiting to be discovered then the knowledge of God gained by others than Christians and Jews must also have something of the nature of revelation. This consideration led some Gifford lecturers⁸ to query the hard and fast distinction implied in Lord Gifford's will. We can say either, that all religion is revealed and allow for degrees of general and special revelation, or conversely, all religious knowledge is "natural" and allow for varying depths of insight. Clement Webb reminds us⁹ of Gibbon's famous gibe concerning the doctrine of the Logos :

B.C.200 Taught in the School of Alexandria

A.D. 97 Revealed by the Apostle John.

There is no reason why revelation should necessarily be discontinuous with what has been discovered "naturally" before, yet if it is to be called "special" revelation one would expect

some "jump" unaccounted for by the ideas that have gone immediately before. So the answer to Gibbon is that between the year 200 B.C. and 97 A.D. something had happened. St. John's teaching about the Logos sprang in one sense "naturally" from the teaching of the Alexandrian schools, but the content of John's teaching depended upon the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. We have the further problem that even this "special" revelation was only understood by comparatively few, who saw beyond the historical events. The recognition of the "special" revelation, like the discovery of the "general" revelation, is dependent upon religious insight or faith. This insight, it has been suggested¹⁰, is not dissimilar to the insight or flair of the mathematician or the musician.

What comes to one man as an insight is passed on as a belief. What was revealed to Peter at Caesarea Philippi became a dogma of the Church. Sometimes experiences of mystical insight are formative for those who are incapable of mystical experience themselves. So visions and insights recorded in the scriptures take on an authority for Christians, who may be misled into thinking that all living experience of God was in the past. Archbishop Soderblom pointed out this problem in one of his lectures :

" Does God continue to reveal himself to mankind ?
A little boy is reading his lesson in Bible history:
'And God said unto Moses.' His critical younger
brother who has not yet begun to go to school: 'What a
stupid you are! God can't speak in that way to a man!'
'Shut up, he could in those days!'"¹¹

The Archbishop added, "Does not theology reason much in the same way?" The Bible contains a record of a series of I-Thou experiences. These experiences may now be regarded as valid because they are recorded in scripture, but they were first recorded in scripture because they were regarded as valid in themselves. Thus even what we have called "propositional" faith is grounded in religious experience. "That Jesus Christ is the Son of God," is a statement in propositional form arising out of the experience of some who lived with Jesus of Nazareth or who experienced the transcendent Christ.

Unless we assume that the Church was guided to include within the Canon all authoritative visions of God there must remain the possibility that others, outside the record of Scripture, made discoveries or received revelations which represent truth about God. The Church has always recognised, even if guardedly, that men and women may have direct visions or intuitions of God, and if within the context of the Christian faith, why not outside it? Karl Rahner asks:

" who is to say that the voice heard in earthly philosophy, is the voice of nature alone (and perhaps of nature's guilt) and not also the groaning of the creature, who is already moved in secret by the Holy Spirit of grace, and longs without realising it for the glory of the children of God?"¹²

Lord Gifford did not prohibit the discussion of revelation, but only disallowed "reference to or reliance upon any supposed special exceptional or so-called miraculous revelation". So

the findings of mysticism or religious insight may provide subject matter for the Gifford lecturer. Lord Gifford desired that natural theology should be discussed just as Chemistry or Astronomy. The fact that knowledge of chemistry and astronomy is limited to a relatively small circle of students does not prevent the production of knowledge within that circle, which will be available to all. So the mystics, possessed of religious insight, may be the experts upon whom the rest must depend for knowledge of God.

The history of mysticism has been well recorded¹³ and anthologies of mysticism tell their own tale. Max Muller in his fourth series of Gifford lectures gave a brief historical account of mysticism and used the title Theosophy or Psychological Religion to describe this direct approach, thus suggesting that religious man is in search of a sophia of God rather than a theology. In studying representative contributions to mystical philosophy we shall consider in what sense we can reach knowledge of God through mysticism, - a natural theology based on a consensus mysticorum.

3. Religious Insight in Platonic Thought

In his lecture on Heraclitus¹⁴ Werner Jaeger spoke of Pythagoras, Xenophanes and Parmenides as well as Heraclitus not only as religious thinkers but as men with a prophetic fervour. Because of the depth of their own religion and their scientific spirit the Greek thinkers were ready to bring reason to bear on religious beliefs, at times criticising the

generally accepted ideas and at times creating new speculative systems. Heraclitus marked a new departure. He spoke of "the word" which the philosopher proclaims. This word, which is eternal, can only be understood by those who are "awake". This "logos" is not the will of God but "a principle according to which everything occurs".¹⁵ Men gain knowledge of this "logos" through insight which is common to all.¹⁶ Yet Heraclitus also said, "Great learning does not teach insight. Otherwise it would have taught Hesiod, Pythagoras, Xenophanes and Hecataeus."¹⁷ The Wise, "which is apart from all things", is the divine principle behind the universe and in some sense can be identified with Zeus.¹⁸ Because of the fragmentary nature of the evidence it is not clear what Heraclitus meant by all this but Anaxagoras has a not dissimilar view of Mind as the source of all things. This Mind is "itself by itself" but man has access to the Divine Mind by means of his own mind. In thinkers like Heraclitus and Anaxagoras we have the precursors of those who see man's way to God as a religious insight which is not identifiable with intellectual perception but not wholly divorced from it.

Plato was a poet and prophet, mystic and philosopher. In describing mysticism J.B.Pratt¹⁹ suggested that most people who try to understand it are like blind psychologists learnedly explaining sight. This is reminiscent of Plato's cave dwellers. The mystic, like Plato's philosopher, is the one who has caught a glimpse of reality. Plato wrote :

" Whether I am right or not God only knows; but, whether true or false, my opinion is that in the world of knowledge the idea of good appears last of all, and is seen only with an effort; and, when seen, is also inferred to be the universal author of all things beautiful and right, parent of light and lord of light in this world, and the source of truth and reason in the other; this is the first great cause which he who would act rationally either in public or private life must behold." ²⁰

For Plato Mind rules the universe²¹ and the man who chooses the life of thought and wisdom leads the most divine of all lives.²² There is in man a genius, a divine principle within him,²³ through which a man comes to know the good and through goodness God. Plato tells us that the way to God, the Father and Maker of the universe, is difficult to find, and if one does find him there is little one can say.²⁴ We are given a description of the spiritual adventure of Socrates in The Symposium, where we are told that love, described as a spirit (*δαίμων*), is the intermediary between the gods and man. Through this power the prayers and sacrifices of men are conveyed to the gods and the commands and rewards of the gods are given to men. Then quite suddenly we move from the plurality of deities to the singular.

" For God mingles not with man; and through this power all the intercourse and speech of God with man, whether awake or asleep, is carried on."²⁵

We may assume that the words of Diotima to Socrates represent Plato's interpretation of the spiritual quest :

" For he who has been instructed thus far in the things of love, and who has learned to see the beautiful in due order and succession, when he comes towards the end will suddenly perceive a nature of wondrous beauty - and this . . . is that final cause of all our former toils, which in the first place is everlasting, not growing and decaying, or waxing and waning . . . but beauty only, absolute, separate, simple and everlasting, which without diminution and without increase, or any change, is imparted to the ever-growing and perishing beauties of all other things."²⁶

It thus appears that philosophy finds its climax in an experience which can only be described as a mystic vision.

The mystic vision does not arise simply from thought but from a whole way of life. The pure in heart are those who see God. As a preparation for this moment of insight the seeker after God must become as like him as possible, and there is no unrighteousness in God. Evil has no place in heaven.

" Wherefore, also, we ought to fly away thither, and to fly thither is to become like God, as far as this is possible, and to become like him is to become holy and just and wise."²⁷

In the Seventh Epistle Plato gives a further description of the difficulties of grasping the Real. In understanding anything we may learn a little from the name, a description, the bodily form or a concept, but the moment of awareness is something beyond all these.

" At last in a flash understanding of each blazes up,

and the mind, as it exerts all its powers to the limit of human capacity, is flooded with light."²⁸

This sort of insight is not verifiable in the scientific sense but Plato claims that it is knowledge, the only real knowledge, and the end of philosophy. James Adam sums up Plato's position in this way :

" The φιλοσοφία , or love of knowledge, on which Plato so constantly insists, is of necessity and from the first a religious aspiration, because of the way in which he regards not only the organ, but also the object of knowledge. The realm of sensibles - the twilight land which lies between the darkness of Not-Being and the light of Being - can never be known; of the seen and temporal there is no knowledge, but only, at best "opinion"; that which alone we can know, is the unseen, the eternal, the divine."²⁹

So Plato set the pattern for western mysticism. He is the guide of those who are aware of their own being but who seek to understand the nature of Being itself. "The true Platonist," said Dean Inge, "is he who sees the invisible and who knows that the visible is its true shadow."³⁰

There is so much in Plato's thought that echoes Hebraic conceptions of God and it is understandable that the Timaieus should be compared with the book of Genesis and that Plato should be thought to have copied from Moses. Indeed he has been described as "Moses thinking in Attic Greek".³¹ This argument enabled the opponents of natural theology to dismiss Platonic thought as evidence for the existence of knowledge of God independent of revelation. Philo thought that Plato and

the Greek philosophers had borrowed all their good ideas from Moses. As this is pure conjecture it can only mean, as Edward Caird pointed out³², that Philo was unable to read Moses except in the light of Plato. At all events he may well have learned the art of "demythologising" from Greek thinkers, for he was always ready to dismiss the anthropomorphism of the Old Testament and to interpret difficult passages symbolically.³³ Supremely the Logos teaching of the Greek thinkers enabled Philo to re-interpret the expression "Word of God", which, in the Old Testament had not carried with it the idea of mediation. In the following brief quotation it is difficult to tell whether we are reading Philo or Plato :

" It is the property of those who serve the living God. . . to mount up with their reason to the height of heaven. They desire to see God, but failing that to see his image, the most sacred word, and next that the most perfect work, the world. For to philosophise is nothing else but a desire to see things accurately."³⁴

In similar vein Philo speaks of the invisible divine reason perceptible only by the intellect³⁵ and of the eyes of the soul by which we see God³⁶. Philo's thoughts of God are summed up by Pflleiderer :

" According to Philo, God is not only not to be thought of in an anthropomorphic way as like man, but He is as such without attributes; He is exalted above all conception, and He is not properly to be designated by any name. One cannot know of Him what He is, but only that He is and what He is not. He is not in space, not in

time, not changeable, not in need of anything; He is absolutely simple, purer than the one, better than the good, more beautiful than the beautiful, more blessed than the blest. He is who He is; only being can absolutely belong to Him as a predicate."³⁷

Thus Philo brought together the wisdom of Athens and the wisdom of Jerusalem, the philosophy of man and the word of God.

It is natural to turn from Philo to Plotinus, who was to sum up the Platonic speculations of seven hundred years. In the thought of Plotinus we see the fruition of the natural theology of Platonism before it was merged with its rival Christianity. Dean Inge, who devoted his Gifford lectures to the work of Plotinus, while not describing the philosophy of Plotinus as natural theology, claimed that he was fulfilling the conditions of Lord Gifford that the lecturers should "study the nature of the Supreme Reality" and that they should be concerned with "knowledge of our own" independent of any external authority. The thought of Plotinus certainly fulfils these two requirements. In so far as there is a philosophy in the mysticism of Plotinus it begins with the soul and the soul's consciousness of itself as part of the One Reality. The foundation of neoplatonic thought is a trinity constituted by the perceiving spirit, the spiritual world and the spiritual perception which unites subject and object in one.³⁸ This knowledge of the Real that the mystic enjoys is different in kind from the knowledge of objects in the sensible world. Plotinus distinguishes it thus :

" Our apprehension of the One does not partake of the nature of either understanding or abstract thought as does our knowledge of other intelligible objects, but has the character of presentation higher than understanding. For understanding proceeds by concepts, and the concept is a multiple affair, and the soul misses the One when she falls into number and plurality. She must then pass beyond understanding and nowhere emerge from her unity."³⁹

Whatever critics may say of mysticism Plotinus himself was quite certain that the experience yielded knowledge of God. It was more than knowledge; it was a union with God, expressed in the classic phrase, "a flight of the alone to the alone".⁴⁰ Plotinus, like his master Plato, regarded this mystical experience as the supreme attainment of the philosopher. He recognised that it was impossible to argue anyone into the experience, and, like Philo, acknowledged that there are ineffable mysteries.

" Remember there are parts that it most concerns you to know which I cannot describe to you; you must come with me and see for yourselves. The vision is for him who will see it."⁴¹

Thus the final argument of Plotinus is what Christopher Dawson described as the traditional argument of natural theology, "Look up and look out, and look down and look in." In his concluding reflections on Plotinus Dean Inge pointed out the strength of neoplatonism, which in the eyes of Christians revealed its weakness :

" Neoplatonism differs from popular Christianity in that it offers us a religion the truth of which is not contingent on any particular events, whether past or future. It floats free of nearly all the 'religious difficulties' which have troubled the minds of believers since the age of science began. It is dependent on no miracles, on no unique revelation through any historical person, on no narratives about the beginning of the world, on no prophecies of its end. No scientific or historical discovery can refute it, and it requires no apologetic except the testimony of spiritual experience."⁴²

It was the task of Plotinus to consolidate the Greek contribution to Christianity. St. Augustine declared that if Plotinus had lived a little later he might well have changed a few words and phrases and become a Christian. As it was he reached through speculation and mystical insight truths which are precious to Christians. From the time of Augustine Platonic and Christian thought were inextricably woven.

4. Christian Mysticism

In the fourth gospel to know Jesus Christ is not simply to know facts about him or to accept theological propositions about his person. To know him is Life Eternal. Jesus Christ is the Word of God made flesh and through the Word men may come to know the only true God. The words in which St. Paul describes how he "was caught up to the third heaven . . . into Paradise . . . and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter,"⁴³ are the language of mysticism. His account of his present partial knowledge of God is Platonic ;

" For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood."⁴⁴

For St. Paul God is the depth of Being, for in him we live and move and have our being. Muller comments that if any one else had uttered these words, they would at once have been condemned as pantheism⁴⁵, but they serve to illustrate the close connection between the mystical thought of Greece and Christianity from the very beginning.

Among the Christian Platonists of Alexandria and in particular in the writings of Clement and Origen we find further evidence of Platonic philosophy leading, if not to mysticism, to the expression of the gospel in language readily understood by mystics. Christianity was a faith seeking a philosophy. The facts of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ had to be placed in a cosmic context and Platonic philosophy was the best instrument to hand. It is sometimes said that the Christian faith could not have spread so rapidly but for the Roman roads and sea routes. It certainly would not have spread so rapidly had it not been able to offer a religion which matched Greek philosophy, and an experience which fulfilled the yearnings of the natural theology of Greek thought.

St. Augustine brought to Christianity a mind steeped in neoplatonic thought. Like Philo he speaks of the inner eye of the soul which is above intelligence. Like Philo and Plotinus he had first hand experience of mystical insight. He tells us

of the ecstasy he experienced before his conversion⁴⁶ and of his experience after his conversion just before his mother's death⁴⁷. There does not appear to be any difference in the content. In the former account we are told :

" The mind somehow knew the unchangeable. And thus with a flash of a trembling glance, it arrived at that which is. And I saw thy invisibility understood by means of the things that are made."⁴⁸

In the second :

" We came at last to our own minds and went beyond them, that we might climb . . . where life is that Wisdom by whom all things are made, both which have been and are to be. Wisdom is not made, but is as she has been and forever shall be; for "to have been" and "to be hereafter" do not apply to her but only "to be", because she is eternal and "to have been" and "to be hereafter" are not eternal."⁴⁹

In both cases we have the intuition of Being, and Augustine seems to consider both equally to be revelations of God. The experience itself is ineffable but in recollection it is translated into intelligible language. Augustine described the process in the First Catechetical Instruction :

" Intuition floods the mind, as it were, with a sudden flash of light, while the expression of it in speech is a slow, drawn-out, and far different process, and while speech is being formed, intellectual apprehension has already hidden itself in its secret recesses; nevertheless because it has stamped in a wonderful way certain imprints upon the memory, these endure for the length of time it takes to pronounce the words; and from these imprints we construct those audible symbols which we call language."⁵⁰

One would be more suspicious of the experience if revelation of some particular piece of information were claimed. The mystic experience is the more impressive because it simply reiterates in many different ways the belief that we live and move and have our being in God, who is himself pure Being.

It would be tedious to go through the whole roll of Christian mystics, for one can only repeat similar experiences described in much the same language in the works of Bernard of Clairvaux, Bonaventure, Hugo of St. Victor and others. It would be wrong to pass over Pseudo-Dionysius, whose work influenced all the later mystics and many theologians. In his work, The Divine Names, he discussed the titles and names given to God in the scriptures. He knew that it was wrong to think of God anthropomorphically or to think of him as Sun, Star, Fire, Rock or indeed as all creation, for God is himself not created, and the scriptures declare that he is nameless except in terms of Being as revealed to Moses. Dionysius says:

" Thus, then, the Universal and Transcendent Cause must both be nameless and also possess the names of all things in order that it may be truly an Universal Dominion, the Centre of creation on which all things depend, as on their Cause and Origin and Goal; and that, according to the Scriptures, It may be all in all, and may be truly called the Creator of the world, originating and perfecting and maintaining all things; their Defence and Dwelling, and the Attractive Force that draws them: and all this in one single, ceaseless and transcendent act."⁵¹

As far as the intellect is able to reach out to God it can only arrive at his existence. Gilson comments :

" Dionysius had good reason . . . to say that the God whom our reason reaches remains, so to speak an unknown God: Deo quasi ignoto conjugimur; for we know indeed that he is, and we know what he is not, but what he is remains wholly unknown to us."⁵²

This might prove to be the end of the quest except that the mystic believes that he can reach through insight a knowledge beyond the grasp of intellect, even though this knowledge is incommunicable in the sense that it cannot be expressed in verifiable propositions. The God of Dionysius is not completely unknown for he is Love. Sometimes he is thought of as the object of love and sometimes as subject. Dionysius tells us that God leads and moves onward "Himself unto Himself."

It has been said that St. Thomas drew almost all of his theology from Dionysius⁵³ and while this is an exaggeration one can frequently discern his influence. The distinction made by Aquinas between natural theology, revealed truth and direct vision is clearly a development from the thought of Dionysius. Following Dionysius, as Muller points out⁵⁴, there were two streams of thought, the Scholastic concerned with the definition of Christian doctrines and the Mystic "concerned with the Divine element in man or the birth of Christ within the soul". These two streams ran side by side through the middle ages, occasionally converging. " A little mysticism," wrote Gwatkin, " was a useful outlet for unquiet spirits, and did little harm so long

as it was safely caged up in a cloister."⁵⁵ Similarly a little rationalism confined to the cloister would do little harm. But in the public controversy between St. Bernard and Abelard we see two fundamentally different approaches to knowledge of God. St. Bernard, the mystic, who was yet able to accept the dogmatic teaching of the Church, was confronted by Abelard who must submit everything to the criticism of reason. Both approaches are necessary. John Watson wrote :

" These two men, like the systems they represent, are really complementary of each other; for, if it is true that the highest reach of the mind must consist in the contemplation of the Absolute, it is not less true that this contemplation must contain within it the specific distinctions of reason."⁵⁶

So the history of mediaeval thought might be written in terms of the three elements in the controversy. An undue emphasis on the purely intellectual approach may lead to arid theologising; an emphasis on mystical insight may lead to all kinds of extravagance; both speculative thought and religious contemplation may be stifled by excessive emphasis on ecclesiastical authority in matters of belief. On the other hand reason can play the part of critic to the mystic and the dogmatic theologian; mysticism is a healthy reaction to the prosaic search for God through discursive thought or accepted creed; the authoritative church, conserving earlier insights intellectual and religious, acts as a safeguard against excesses.

5. The Later Influence of Mysticism

Meister Eckhart was described by one Gifford lecturer⁵⁷ as the greatest of all speculative mystics; he is seen by some scholars as a precursor of the Reformation. While not openly opposed to scholastic thought men like Eckhart fell back upon the authority of personal religion. Again we find an emphasis on direct knowledge of God. Eckhart claimed to know that God is but not what he is. Eckhart declared that God is "the God who understands and who is grasped by the intellect alone, who is all intellect."⁵⁸

" It is perfectly clear . . . that God alone is in the true sense of the word, that He is intellect or understanding, and that He is understanding alone, purely and simply, apart from any other being."⁵⁹

As God is identified with Being, so for Eckhart evil is non-being. In much the same sense the distinction between Being and non-being has been made by thinkers from Parmenides to Tillich. Eckhart speaks variously of a power within man, an uncreated light or a divine spark, by means of which he may penetrate to the very ground of his being.⁶⁰ One can understand how a man who sought God in this personal and intimate way, almost independently of church and Scriptures should come under suspicion of heresy.

The concept of God as the ground of being and man as in some sense a reflection of that being is to be found in the thought of Tauler, Boehme and other German mystics and their influence was to be felt by later theologians. Just as Aquinas

and the mediaevals were influenced by the earlier mystics so Luther and Calvin were influenced by their later counterparts. Boehme's influence extended to a later period and, through the English mystics, helped to counteract the deism of the eighteenth century. His natural theology was based on feeling and imagination rather than on reasoning and demonstration. With Christopher Dawson⁶¹ we may describe Boehme as a natural theologian "of a sort" but his teaching was very different from the natural theology of the Enlightenment.

6. Mysticism and Philosophy

Mysticism, as we have seen, is a compound of thought and feeling, speculation and intuition. It offers a way of escape from the dryness of a purely intellectual search for God and from the coldness of a formal creed. The influence of mysticism can be seen in philosophy and in particular in the thought of Spinoza and Hegel. Writing of Spinoza, A.E.Taylor said :

" If we could look anywhere for religion wholly independent of history, revelation, authority, institutions, it is hard to see where we might look with better prospect of success than in Spinoza's Ethics."⁶²

Part One of the Ethics with its definitions, axioms and propositions and its terse title, "Concerning God", promises well. We are led to expect a clear mathematical demonstration, but we learn later that we come to know God through an intellectual love, which, we are told, is the love with which God loves himself. We realise then that we are out of the

realm of mathematics and once more in the domain of mysticism, and we recall Eckhart's statement that "the eye with which I see God is the same as that with which God sees me."⁶³

A.E.Taylor commented :

" The God who thus loves Himself is not really the 'substance' of the First Part of the Ethics: He is the 'Blessed One' of the devout Jewish home in which the philosopher had been brought up."⁶⁴

If we take the trouble to 'translate' Spinoza's Substance we find that God is that which 'stands under' the world we know, which is another way of saying that God is the ground of being. We find at the end of Part One that all we can know of God is that he necessarily exists, that he is one alone and the free cause of all things. It is the living religion at the heart of Spinoza's philosophy that saves him from complete pantheism. It is the emotional element in his thought that led to the description of Spinoza as God-intoxicated. His philosophy at first sight may appear to be a ^ocolly calculated mathematical demonstration of the existence of God, but it is a philosophy supporting a faith rather than a metaphysic generating a religion. The speculative mystic would defend the position on the ground that it is a mistake to separate the intellectual and emotional elements in thought. "Mysticism," wrote Dean Inge, "is a spiritual philosophy which demands the concurrent activity of thought, will and feeling."⁶⁵ He added that "there is no special organ for the reception of Divine or

spiritual truth, which is simply the knowledge of the world as it really is."⁶⁶ Thus when Spinoza viewed the world mathematically he was seeing it partially; when he looked at it through the amor intellectualis Dei he was seeing it as it really is.

A similar distinction was made by Hegel between understanding and reason. Understanding deals with each predicate as a separate and independent unit. Reason, which is described by Hegel as immediate knowledge, treats reality as a whole. "Reason is the region in which alone religion can be at home."⁶⁷ Understanding results in the scientific analysis of the universe; reason leads to a religious and mystical attitude. Writing of this immediate knowledge, Hegel said;

" Inasmuch as this knowledge exists immediately in myself, all external authority, all foreign attestation is cast aside; what is to be of value to me must have its verification in my own spirit, and in order that I may believe I must have the witness of my spirit. It may indeed come to me from without, but any such external origin is a matter of indifference; if it is to be valid, this validity can only build itself up upon the foundation of all truth, in the witness of the Spirit."⁶⁸

The authoritative nature of the mystical experience could not be expressed more clearly. This is not to say that Hegel was a mystic in the traditional sense, but in his emphasis on immediate knowledge of God and his stress on the unity of man with the Absolute he provided a philosophy within which mysticism is at home. It was this mystico-religious element

in Hegelianism which proved a stumbling block at a time when the scientific spirit of the nineteenth century was changing to the neo-positivist attitude of the twentieth.

7. The New Stress on Feeling

In the Methodist revival of the eighteenth century Wesley, influenced by the Moravians and indirectly by Boehme and the mystics through William Law, offered a way of escape from the arid deism which had infected so much of the religious life of England. Wesley always insisted on a reasonable approach in matters of religion, but he would scarcely have been open to the charge of 'enthusiasm' had not the emotional element in his preaching been strong. The believer must 'feel' and 'know' the saving grace of God. Wesley had in his own way attempted to reconcile reason and religion but he was an evangelist rather than a theologian. It was to be left to a greater theologian than Wesley to attempt a reconciliation which would profoundly influence modern theology.

Schleiermacher, like Wesley, was greatly influenced by the Moravians, among whom he was brought up. Later he came under the influence of the philosophy and theology of the Enlightenment and finally under the guidance of Spinoza and the Romantics reached the position expressed in the Reden. Like the mystics Schleiermacher criticised any attempt to separate thought, feeling and activity. Man's life is a unity. To the cultured despisers of religion he said :

" Because you do not deal with life in a living way, your conception bears the stamp of perishableness, and is altogether meagre. True science is complete vision; true practice is culture and art self-produced; true religion is sense and taste for the Infinite."⁶⁹

Religion offers a full comprehension of the meaning of the universe in a way that science cannot.

" The sum total of religion is to feel that, in its highest unity, all that moves us in feeling is one; to feel that aught single and particular is only possible by means of this unity; to feel, that is to say, that our being and living is a being and living in and through God."⁷⁰

Finally :

" True religion is . . . immediate consciousness of the Deity as He is found in ourselves and in the world."⁷¹

Thus a man finds meaning in the depths of his own being and Schleiermacher speaks with reverence of a great and powerful mysticism, through which "some secret power ever drives the man back upon himself, and he finds himself to be the plan and key of the Whole."⁷² Religion is ultimately a feeling of dependence. Kant's Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone had appeared six years before the Reden. Schleiermacher was protesting against the state of affairs in which religion had become a metaphysic or a system of morality. Schleiermacher rediscovered the sensus Numinis, that which differentiates religion from metaphysics and morality.

Rudolf Otto expressed profound admiration for Schleiermacher but criticised him on the ground that he makes the fact

of God an inference from the feeling of dependence. Otto believed that the experience of the numinous has immediate reference to an object outside the self - a numen praesens.⁷³ Otto's analysis of the experience of the numinous is brilliant, but the question remains whether or not this experience does indeed furnish what we may call knowledge of God. He describes the "Holy" as an a priori category, by which he means that it is something we recognise as soon as it is pointed out to us. In support of this contention he quotes Luther, who says:

" For all men, as soon as they hear it treated of, find this belief written in their hearts, and acknowledge it as proved, even unwillingly : first, that God is omnipotent . . ."⁷⁴

The affective experience is thus accompanied simultaneously by a judgment of fact. The thought that God is and the feeling that God is are inseparable. These are the two elements in the complex category of the "Holy" - the rational and the non-rational, both of which are a priori. The non-rational preserves the mystical element in religion and prevents it from becoming mere rationalism, and the rational element prevents it from sinking into fanaticism or mere "mysticality". The process of recognising the "Holy" or the numinous Otto describes as "divination". He acknowledges that it is impossible to prove that this experience is an objective experience of God, but he is content to leave the experience as self-authenticating. Thus :

" Here, if anywhere, coercion by proof and demonstration and the mistaken application of logical and juridical processes should be excluded; here, if anywhere, should be liberty, the unconstrained recognition and inward acknowledgment that comes from deep within the soul, stirred spontaneously, apart from all conceptual theory." 75

Otto's description of the experience of the numinous is very much like Buber's description of the I-Thou relationship. The experience of the numinous is an I-Thou encounter and, in spite of the careful analysis, finally ineffable. As soon as we seek to describe it it becomes an I-It relationship and ceases to be a religious experience. Yet if this direct experience does give some knowledge of God it is arguable that - in some sense - this is natural theology. It is also arguable that such knowledge comes through revelation and cannot strictly be called natural theology. We return to this issue later.

8. Mystical Experience as discussed in Gifford Lectures

Of all Gifford lecturers William James made the most thorough study of mysticism and religious experience. He himself knew nothing at first hand of such experience. He found in his analysis of mystical experience two main characteristics, its ineffability and its noetic quality. The experiencers are quite sure that they "know" something of God but find great difficulty in expressing the truth they have grasped. James quoted case after case to illustrate the nature of religious experience but concluded that while

the experiences were undoubtedly authoritative for the experients they have no authority for those outside the experience. He admitted the impressiveness of the evidence but "the utmost they (the mystics) can ever ask of us in this life is to admit that they establish a presumption."⁷⁶

He also concluded that "the existence of mystical states absolutely overthrows the pretension of non-mystical states to be the sole and ultimate dictators of what we may believe."⁷⁷ William James established that in any discussion of the existence of God religious experience is part of the data that must be taken into account.

Gilson, who is not unsympathetic towards the mystics, writes :

" After reading W. James, I still want to know if my religious experience is an experience of God, or an experience of myself."⁷⁸

This is a proper question and one that must be answered. It is clear that religious experience tells us something about ourselves. The one who has had the experience claims that it tells him something about God, unless on reflection he has judged that the experience was a subjectively induced illusion. Even if he claims that he has learnt something about God he will claim no more than faith-knowledge. A. J. Ayer flatly denies the possibility of reaching any kind of knowledge by means of mystical insight. He declares :

" Those philosophers who fill their books with assertions that they intuitively 'know' this or that

moral or religious 'truth' are merely providing material for the psychoanalyst. For no act of intuition can be said to reveal a truth about any matter of fact unless it issues in verifiable propositions. And all such propositions are to be incorporated in the system of empirical propositions which constitute science."⁷⁹

Now no mystic would dispute the fact that the knowledge he gains is different in kind from the knowledge categorised as science. He would wish to assert, however, that the scientist's "knowledge" of the world is incomplete and that the insights gained through mystical experience do tell us something about the world and to that extent may be described as knowledge. If we accept Ayer's definition of knowledge then the argument is over before we begin. No Gifford lecturer, nor anyone else, would claim that religious "truths" are scientifically verifiable.

Of the Gifford lecturers who have approached religious truths from a scientific viewpoint four in particular have stressed the fact that science only gives a partial account of the universe. "Science," wrote Emile Boutroux, "is the selection and classification of all that which, at any time and for any mind, can be the object of clear and distinct knowledge."⁸⁰ With this Professor Ayer would agree and would stop there. This is the only kind of knowledge he is interested in. But Emile Boutroux went further :

" Religion is the fullest possible realisation of the human self . . . Religion takes as her starting point a concrete bit of experience, a full fact, comprising thought, feeling, and, perhaps, the faint sense of participation in the life of the universe. The starting-

point of science is an abstraction, i.e. an element extracted from the given fact and considered separately."⁸¹

The scientist abstracts from experience and not surprisingly finishes up with abstractions - extremely useful abstractions. The religious man - and we take the mystic to be the religious expert - sees life in its wholeness and grasps a meaning that evades the scientist. Boutroux sums up the distinction in the aphorism, "Man uses science, but he lives religion."⁸²

Eddington made the same point, quoting an elaborate formula showing that wind of less than half a mile per hour will leave the surface of water unruffled while at a mile an hour there will be minute corrugations. Over against the formula he set some lines of Rupert Brooke :

" There are waters blown by changing winds to laughter
And lit by the rich skies, all day. And after,
Frost with a gesture, stays the waves that dance
And wandering loveliness. He leaves a white
Unbroken glory, a gathered radiance,
A width, a shining peace, under the night."⁸³

We may say, and rightly, that only a Rupert Brooke sees the waves like this, but no-one sees the wind playing on the water in the shape of a formula. And while only a poet can express his "vision" in poetical language there are others who, although not able to write poetry, immediately appreciate the poet's vision at second hand. Similarly no-one experiences a rainbow as "a band of aetherial vibrations arranged in systematic order of wavelength from about .000040 cm. to .000072 cm."⁸⁴

Indeed we would not be giving a correct scientific account of

the world did we not recognise that people do see rainbows and not wavelengths. A full account of the situation must include the fact that there are such things as aesthetic and religious experiences. There are other than religious experiences that are ineffable. When a joke is explained the whole experience of humour may be lost. If any experience is closely analysed the very essence of the experience may be destroyed. Eddington offered a defence for a mystic haled before a tribunal of scientists :

" The familiar material world of everyday conceptions, though lacking somewhat in scientific truth, is good enough to live in; in fact the scientific world of pointer readings would be an impossible sort of place to inhabit. It is a symbolic world and the only thing that could live comfortably in it would be a symbol. But I am not a symbol; I am compounded of that mental activity which ^{is} from your point of view a nest of illusion, so that to accord with my own nature I have to transform even the world explored by my senses. But I am not merely made up of senses; the rest of my nature has to live and grow. I have to render account of that environment into which it has an outlet. My conception of my spiritual environment is not to be compared with your scientific world of pointer readings; it is an everyday world to be compared with the material world of familiar experience. I claim it as no more real and no less real than that. Primarily it is not a world to be analysed, but a world to be lived in."⁸⁵

In the process of living in this world we depend on the sense organs we possess. Our view of the world depends upon our consciousness of it and our consciousness is part of the data.

Eddington speaks of the "pointer readings" of the scientist but also of the "background of pointer readings" which is life itself. We cannot live as if this background did not exist. We cannot live as if we had no consciousness of other than scientific facts. Eddington hazarded the guess that in some way by the operation of natural selection the human mind has accepted values given to it by the external world-stuff and that "the world-stuff behind the pointer readings is of a nature continuous with mind." This is not an argument for the existence of God, let alone a proof - "that idol before whom the pure mathematician tortures himself." It is to say that if we take into account the data which is passed over by science then the religious account of the universe is at least plausible.

Bishop Barnes, a scholar trained in the disciplines of science and theology, thought it relevant to set down in his Gifford lectures some of his own experiences as part of the evidence to be considered :

" On the last occasion, which still remains vivid, I sat down in the early afternoon on a piece of bare turf in a fern-covered moor near the sea. I remember that I was going to bathe from a stretch of shingle to which the few people who stayed in the village seldom went. Suddenly the noise of insects was hushed. Time seemed to stop. A sense of infinite power and peace came upon me. I can best liken the combination of timelessness with amazing fullness of existence to the feeling one gets in watching the rim of a great silent fly-wheel or the unmoving surface of a deep, strongly flowing river. Nothing happened : yet

existence was completely full. All was clear. I was in a world where the confusion and waste and loss inseparable from time had vanished. At the heart of the world there was power and peace and eternal life."⁸⁶

Bishop Barnes does not claim that his faith is grounded in such experience; nevertheless such experience confirms a faith held on other grounds. It does not yield any verifiable knowledge of God but it is at least part of the evidence.

More recently Michael Polanyi has reminded us of the partial nature of the scientist's account of the universe. He describes the mystic experience as a deliberate attempt to relax intellectual control and to concentrate on the universe as a whole rather than on particulars. In his Gifford lectures he shows how religion has affinities with intellectual experiences and he claims that "the relation of Christianity to natural experience . . . is but one thread in this network of mutual penetrations."⁸⁷ At the same time religious and natural findings by-pass each other so that it is pointless to try to prove an article of faith such as the virgin Birth biologically, and in the end the religious account of reality may be more complete than the scientific. Says Polanyi :

" The book of Genesis and its great pictorial illustrations like the frescoes of Michelangelo, remain a far more intelligent account of the nature and origin of the universe than the representation of the world as a chance collocation of atoms. For the biblical cosmology continues to express - however inadequately - the significance of the fact that the world exists and that man has emerged from it, while the scientific picture

denies any meaning to the world, and indeed ignores all our most vital experiences of this world."⁸⁸

Polanyi again reminds us that the human mind is part of the world it reflects. The fact of consciousness provides a clue as well as the facts of which we are conscious. In his concluding paragraph Polanyi writes :

" So far as we know, the tiny fragments of the universe embodied in man are the only centres of thought and responsibility in the visible world. If that be so, the appearance of the human mind has been so far the ultimate stage in the awakening of the world; and all that has gone before, the strivings of a myriad centres that have taken the risks of living and believing, seem to have all been pursuing, along rival lines, the aim now achieved by us up to this point. They are all akin to us . . . We may envisage then a cosmic field which called forth all these centres by offering them a short-lived, limited, hazardous opportunity for making some progress of their own towards an unthinkable consummation. And that is also, I believe, how a Christian is placed when worshipping God."⁸⁹

This is not something that the intellect alone can grasp, nor is it something that can be grasped without the intellect. Dean Inge, we recall, described the religious insight which is gained through mysticism as "a spiritual philosophy which demands the concurrent activity of thought, will, and feeling."⁹⁰

9. The Validity of Religious Insight

The Gifford lecturers, discussed in the preceding section, while not mystics themselves, recognised that many people enjoy milder forms of mystical experience - intuitions of the wholeness

of life. Some mystics speak of "the logic of the whole personality."⁹¹ The mind must operate as a "well-knit whole." T.H.Hughes, to whose study of mysticism we have already referred, described the mystic's insight in this way :

" The mystic vision breaks, truth is seen with open face, not by an organ different from reason, nor yet by a special gift which only few possess. It is seen by the highest and fullest operation of reason itself, at that point where the fusion of the different elements is most complete under the dominance of love."⁹²

If the "knowledge" achieved by this "fullest operation of reason" is to be accepted it must stand up to some of the tests applied to what we ordinarily call knowledge achieved by what we ordinarily call reason.

At a minimum such knowledge must be non-contradictory. For instance, the insight vouchsafed to the mystics that God is one and the "revelation" granted to the prophetess of the Lumpur church that there are two gods, one black and one white, cannot both be true. Reason or common sense tells us that the two claims cannot both be correct. We then have to ask by what standard we judge between two contradictory insights. There are at least three answers :

- (1) We would naturally look for some general agreement between those who have religious insight. Nevertheless the odd man out may be the one who has seen a new truth.
- (2) If we have accepted some set formulation of religious belief by faith, then we would expect any religious "vision" to confirm our belief, or at least not to contradict it.

(3) Because of the self-consistency we find in our experience of the universe, we would expect to find a self-consistency in the spiritual realm. We expect knowledge of any kind to be reasonable.

This means that any religious insight must be subjected to examination by reason for purposes of comparing it with other insights or for discover^{ing} its own self-consistency.

William James spoke of the "eternal unanimity" of the mystics, quoting from the literature of Hinduism, Sufism and the Christian Mystics to show agreement on the two central affirmations of the unity of God and the possibility of man's finding salvation through union with God.⁹³ One of the reasons given by C.E.M. Joad for his conversion to Christian belief was the unity of the evidence of the mystics, whom he saw as the religious experts.⁹⁴ Soderblom in his Gifford lectures brought out the unity of the central affirmations of various living religions. Inge claimed that we can only explain this close agreement if we regard the mystical experience as a genuine part of human nature.⁹⁵ It would be foolish, however, to deny the diversity and the contradictions in the evidence. As William James reminds us, once we go beyond the central agreement we find the widest diversity. The evidence is not clear enough to establish proof but it is nevertheless impressive. An account such as that given in Aldous Huxley's Perennial Philosophy is sufficient to establish the point of general agreement. When we have seen beyond the extravagances and idiosyncrasies of

individual mystics there remains what is claimed to be a basic experience of reality.

In The World and the Individual Josiah Royce discussed the nature of mysticism at some length. "Mysticism," he declared, "consists in asserting that to be means, simply and wholly, to be immediate."⁹⁶ The mystic believes profoundly that he is in touch with reality.

" He gets his reality not by thinking, but by consulting the data of experience. He is not stupid. And he is trying, very skilfully, to be a pure empiricist. Indeed, I should maintain that the mystics are the only thorough-going empiricists in the history of philosophy."⁹⁷

The mystic differs from the realist thinker in that he is not satisfied with the partial fleeting and at times contradictory appearance of things. He is dissatisfied with the so called realist view of the world because he has caught a glimpse of the "more Real". He has discovered internal meanings while the realist is only concerned with external meaning.

" The essence of this view of the mystic is that to be real means to be felt as the absolute goal and consequent quietus of all thinking, and so of all striving. Or in other words, Reality is that which you immediately feel when, thought satisfied, you cease to think."⁹⁸

Royce traced the development of philosophical mysticism in the Upanishads and drew parallels from western mysticism. He does not find in mysticism a satisfactory philosophy, but in his own particular form of Absolute Idealism he offered a philosophy which attempts to do justice to the experience of the mystic and the realist.

C.A.Campbell, after a careful examination of Otto's analysis of religious experience, concluded that the experience of the numinous cannot be shown to be a direct awareness of God even if in fact it is. We cannot by rational argument prove that what we have is real knowledge of God, but at the same time we can use reason to examine those experiences that purport to yield such knowledge. God would not be the mysterium tremendum if indeed he were accessible to reason. Yet we may know something analogically about God. Otto's solution, which is accepted by Campbell, is to say that there is a felt analogy between emotions we have when we experience ordinary events and the emotions we have when we experience the numinous. It is, therefore, not unreasonable to suggest that there must be some similar analogy between the object which evokes the emotion and the numinous. Campbell is thus led to a supra-rational theism :

" i.e. a Theism which proclaims that the Nature of God is in principle incapable of being conceived in terms of rational concepts in their literal significance, but that certain of these concepts are validly applicable to God when understood not as literal portrayals, but as appropriate symbols, of the Divine Nature."⁹⁹

Campbell goes on to claim "symbolic validity" for the concepts which express our knowledge of God. Those qualities we ascribe to God are only symbols or ideograms of the Divine. The analogies are sound, it is argued, not because there is a conceived identity between the symbol and the symbolizandum, but a felt identity.¹⁰⁰ For Campbell, then, religious experience

may produce a supra-rational theology which may be examined and tested by reason, but he remains unconvinced by Otto's assertion that the experience of the numinous is evidence of the objective existence of God. H.J.Paton, in his discussion of Otto, arrived at a similar conclusion. "What Otto has done," said Paton, "is . . . to supply material for philosophical reflection."¹⁰¹ Such unanimity as can be found among the Gifford lecturers is best expressed by saying that any discussion of the truth of religion must take into account the experiences which we call religious but that these experiences of themselves do not furnish proof of the existence of God convincing to others than the experiencers.

10 Religious Insight and Natural Theology

We may now ask if there is any sense in which we can describe religious insight as natural theology or as yielding natural theology. Otto reminds us that there is in any religious experience a combination of the rational and the non-rational. There is such a combination in the mystic's experience and if Baillie's understanding of faith is correct there is a cognitive element in faith. There are then two possible ways in which we can think of natural theology in relation to religious insight, which may be gained through mystical experiences, milder forms of mysticism or through faith.

(1) We can identify natural theology with the rational element in such experience. We could thus conclude that God exists, that he is one, and that he reveals himself to man. Natural theology

would then be the summation of those truths about God which can be known apart from the Judaeo-Christian revelation. But the mystics would claim that their experience of God comes not simply through their seeking but through the revelation of God. St. Paul recognised that the gentiles could only know of God because God had revealed himself to them.¹⁰² We are thus led to the strange conclusion that natural theology is revealed truth. It would be impossible to discover a reluctant God and it is clear that if God is a God who reveals himself it is impossible to know him apart from his revelation. This kind of natural theology is utterly impossible for Barth and is nothing more than idolatry. On the other hand it would be readily accepted by those who assert that anyone who looks at the world in the right way will know of God's existence.

(2) Alternatively, recognising that all knowledge of God depends ultimately on revelation, and recognising the strong subjective element in any religious experience, we can give to natural theology the task of criticising and assessing the insights that arise from religious experience. In this case the natural theologian would be the man who thinks about God rather than the one who knows about God. The man who knows about God is the man of faith or the man of religious insight.

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PART THREE

NATURAL THEOLOGY TODAY

Chapter One

Lord Gifford's Intention

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|--|----------|
| 1. Was Lord Gifford asking the Impossible? | page 398 |
| 2. Man's Conceptions of God | 400 |
| 3. The Foundation of Ethics | 401 |
| 4. The Truth of Man's Conceptions of God | 401 |
| 5. Discovery and Revelation | 402 |
| Reference Notes | 404 |

1 Was Lord Gifford asking the impossible ?

We are now in a position to assess how far Lord Gifford's intentions have been fulfilled and to ask, in view of the changing fortunes of natural theology, how far it is possible today to fulfil the conditions laid down in 1885. Lord Gifford wished the lecturers to formulate what he called "true knowledge of God." Later it is described as "the true and felt knowledge (not merely nominal knowledge)." Lord Gifford defined this subject matter as natural theology, declaring that it was to be understood in the widest sense of the term and describing it under four heads :

- (1) The Knowledge of God, the Infinite, the All, the First and Only Cause, the One and the Sole Substance, the Sole Being, the Sole Reality, and the Sole Existence.
- (2) The Knowledge of His Nature and Attributes.
- (3) The Knowledge of the Relations which men and the whole universe bear to Him.
- (4) The Knowledge of the Nature and Foundation of Ethics or Morals, and of all Obligations and Duties thence arising.

The subject matter permitted under the first two heads is later amplified :

" For example, they may freely discuss . . . all questions about man's conceptions of God or the Infinite, their origin, nature and truth, whether he can have any such conceptions, whether God is under any or what limitations, and so on."

Finally this knowledge was to be expounded "without reference to or reliance upon any supposed special exceptional or so-called miraculous revelation."

The latter condition cannot be interpreted literally. It would seriously curtail enquiry if no reference were permitted to any supposed miraculous revelation. Reference to the Oracle at Delphi would be as inadmissible as reference to the Incarnation. The phrase "without reference to" must be understood in the light of the supporting phrase "without . . . reliance upon". No appeal is to be made to miraculous revelation as unquestioned authority. But since "all questions about man's conceptions of God" are to be discussed it is permissible to discuss the conception of a God who reveals himself. It is clear that the Gifford lecturer may discuss the origin and nature of such conceptions of God. The difficulty arises when he wishes to discuss the truth of such conceptions; he must make no direct appeal to the supposed special revelation.

If our conclusions are right then it seems that natural theology is impotent to produce any knowledge of God, true or felt. All knowledge of God is in some sense revealed, and the task of natural theology is to judge and assess. Lord Gifford was assuming that philosophical speculation would confirm his own Spinozistic religion. In his description of God he laid down the conclusion of what was to be an impartial enquiry! Natural theology, as we have seen it, cannot construct a religion, and yet this seems to have been Lord Gifford's aim.

Fortunately the wording of his will allows great breadth of interpretation. The lectureships have provided ample scope for the discussion of religion in the past even if the term natural theology cannot be universally applied. Even if we limit the function of natural theology in the ways we have suggested, it will always be possible to fulfil one of Lord Gifford's wishes - that "able reverent, men, true thinkers, sincere lovers of and earnest inquirers after truth" should be able to discuss the meaning of life.

2. Man's Conceptions of God

Any study of comparative religion fulfils the letter of the law. If a particular conception of God has been held at any time then its origin, nature and truth can be discussed. It is permissible to discuss the origin and nature of beliefs, as Sir James Frazer and others have done, without reference to their truth. Similarly it is allowable to give an objective account, as Pfeleiderer did, of the conceptions of God actually held in the course of the development of Christian theology. It is arguable that Barth's interpretation of the Scottish Confession of 1560 is an account of the origin and nature of a conception of God actually held. The real problem emerges when a Gifford lecturer begins to discuss the truth of any particular conception of God. By what standard is he to make his judgment? He may judge some primitive conception of God to be self-contradictory or nonsensical and therefore untrue. But if he himself is a Christian (or a Mohammedan or a Jew

for that matter,) he will find it difficult to avoid judging other concepts of God by reference to his own which depends on "special revelation". Because of the problems involved in Lord Gifford's prohibition, some Gifford lecturers, as we have seen, produced purely objective studies of religion. Studies such as those of Frazer, Sayce and MacBeath fulfil the conditions laid down by Lord Gifford but they are studies of religion rather than natural theology.

3. The Foundation of Ethics

Other scholars have seized upon the clause which allows studies concerning " the Knowledge of the Nature and Foundation of Ethics or Morals, and of all Obligations and Duties thence arising." Again, purely ethical studies fall within the permitted scope, but unless the lecturer concerned goes on to consider the bearing of moral experience upon the problem of the existence and nature of God then the study, though permissible under the Gifford deeds, is not natural theology. The lectures of W.D. Ross, Brand Blanshard and von Wright fall within the scope allowed by the will, but the scholars concerned would make no claim to be doing natural theology. On the other hand the studies of Sorley, A.E. Taylor and De Burgh are clearly within the realm of natural theology.

4. The Truth of Man's Conceptions of God

If it is ever conclusively demonstrated that there is no such study as natural theology appointments to Gifford chairs will be confined to students of comparative religion and ethics.

In that case only one part of Lord Gifford's intention would be fulfilled. He clearly intended that his lecturers should go beyond the study of religion and ethics to reach a "knowledge of God", which should be taken in this context to include "the Infinite, the All, the First and Only Cause, etc." as set out in the will. The word "knowledge" is repeated again and again and more than on reference is made to the "truth" of man's conceptions of God, so that it is clear that he was not concerned merely to find out what people actually believed in ancient Egypt or sixteenth century Scotland. His use of the word "theology" carries the implication that he was concerned with truth about God rather than facts concerning religion. This makes it exceedingly difficult for the natural theologian who concludes that while his studies may investigate what are claimed to be truths about God he is in fact unable to establish their truth without appeal to special revelation. If indeed it is true, as Temple concluded, that "Natural Theology ends in a hunger for that Divine Revelation which it began by excluding from its purview,"¹ then the Gifford lecturer must be content with a partial or limited knowledge of God, as must the natural theologian qua natural theologian.

5 Discovery and Revelation

Lord Gifford's qualification of theology by the term "natural" must be understood in the light of his veto on "reference to or reliance upon any supposed special exceptional or so-called miraculous revelation." The veto does not apply

to revelation as such but only to "special" revelation. John Baillie remarked that it is doubtful whether anybody has ever really thought that God could be discovered if he were not willing to reveal himself,² and, as we have seen, Lord Gifford himself accepted "general" revelation.³ If there is such "general" revelation then there will be a very important difference between natural theology and any other science. The two sciences instanced by Lord Gifford, Chemistry and Astronomy, deal with truths about the world or the heavens that have been awaiting discovery. We only speak figuratively of Nature revealing her hidden secrets. If God does reveal himself even if only in a "general" way, then natural theology can never be a scientific investigation "just as astronomy or chemistry". The truths of astronomy or chemistry become clear to anyone who has the necessary background of knowledge and sufficient intelligence to understand. But when the truth of the existence of God is explained to intelligent people who may have a background of general knowledge of religion, it does not necessarily become clear. The listener may understand the argument by unaided reason but the element of faith is missing. It appears that faith is necessary for the apprehension of any kind of revelation "general" or "special". But faith and reason need not be mutually exclusive. If it is true that faith is involved in the acceptance of any religious truth, it is also true that reason is involved in the apprehension of any such truth. Bishop Butler declared :

" Reason is indeed the only faculty wherewith to judge concerning anything, even revelation itself."⁴

Leonard Hodgson pointed out⁵ that neither the substitution of faith for reason nor the supersession of reason by faith is necessary. Reason and faith are both means whereby we apprehend spiritual truths, reason representing the critical faculties of man's mind which need to be active if faith is to be distinguished from credulity.

This means that if natural theology is to be the work of unaided reason it must limit itself to the critical assessment of revealed truth or^{to} speculative construction against which revealed truth may be tested. There would be an angry "No!" from Karl Barth even to such a limited natural theology. Knowledge of God comes entirely from God and man is helpless and sinful in groping for this knowledge by human reason. If Barth is right then of all men the natural theologian is most wretched. The sick man of Europe is ready for burial - in unconsecrated ground! If there is to be any future for natural theology Barth must be answered.

Chapter One

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Chapter Two

The Barthian Veto

1. The Avowed Opponent of Natural Theology	page 406
2. Barth and St. Paul	409
3. The Imago Dei	413
4. Barth and St. Anselm	419
5. Barth and Reformed Theology	420
6. Knowledge of God	423
7. The Philosopher's God	429
8. A Possible Natural Theology	434
Reference Notes	441

1. The Avowed Opponent of Natural Theology

Barth is the self-declared opponent of all natural theology and proposed to serve natural theology by presenting to it "its indispensable opponent". He wrote :

" It can only be to the good of "Natural Theology" to be able once again to measure itself as the truth - if it is the truth! - by that which from its point of view is the greatest of errors."¹

But who or what is this indispensable opponent? What is the greatest of errors from the viewpoint of natural theology? Natural theology does not need to deny the possibility of revelation though, as natural theology, it will make no appeal to revelation. There is no antithesis between Roman Catholic theology and natural theology. Both Calvin and Luther allowed a carefully circumscribed place to natural theology. What Barth describes as Protestant Modernism or Neo-protestantism gives natural theology a place. Contemporary theologians like Brunner and Tillich recognise that there are limited functions performed by natural theology. Only Barth and his disciples deny the very possibility of natural theology. He recognises that there is such a study as natural theology but does not see how there can be any fruitful conclusions from such a study. The history of natural theology, Barth would claim, consists of the adventures of man in search of God while Christian truth tells of the advent of God in search of man. The adventures of man in search of God, like Alice's adventures in Wonderland, finish exactly where they began. So Barth is the real opponent of natural theology, and

Barthian theology, in spite of the truth it embodies, is from the viewpoint of natural theology the greatest of errors.

If Barth is right then every approach we have so far made is a cul-de-sac. Reason has no right to criticise the truths of religion for reason is corrupt. Natural theology is worse than useless as apologetic for conversion comes only by the proclamation of the Word of God. Metaphysics is no more than the raising of false images. Mysticism looks for God in the wrong direction; indeed, looking for God in any direction is presumptuous. Least of all can natural theology find employment as an ally of faith. Salvation is sola fide and unredeemed reason is a helpless intruder.

Barth tells us that he learnt his fundamental attitude to the problem of the knowledge of God at the feet of St. Anselm.² Reason can neither lead us to faith nor confirm our faith.

" The aim of theology cannot be to lead men to faith, nor to confirm them in the faith, nor to deliver them from doubt. Neither does the man who asks theological questions ask them for the sake of the existence of his faith; his theological answers, however complete they may be, can have no bearing on the existence of his faith."³

The possibility that rational argument can lead a man to a position from which he can make either a confident or despairing leap of faith is discounted. In his Church Dogmatics Barth writes :

" If it is an experiment - even the last and greatest - in a series of other experiments; if we think that after

trying this or that we will or can in the last resort try also a religious philosophy of authority, and then in this framework give Jesus, the Bible or Church dogma a trial too, we simply cannot expect to think and speak with the certainty of the true knowledge of God. The sacrificium intellectus as the last despairing, audacious act of self-confidence, in which a man thinks he can decide upon his very knowledge of God, has always turned out to be a bit of conjuring, about which no one can be happy in the long run. Even interpreted as a leap into faith, it does not create a position which cannot be attacked and is not attacked. For why should not a religious philosophy of authority be just as open to attack, and just as freely attacked, as any other philosophy? The doubter cannot free himself from doubt, even by persuading himself to will to doubt no more, even by performing this sacrificium. And the doubter cannot free other doubters from their doubt by exacting this sacrificium from them - perhaps by making it convincing, perhaps by inducing them to perform it for themselves. He must not be a doubter at all if help is to come to him and through him to others."⁴

This passage is quoted at length for it strikes at the very possibility of any natural theology. A discussion such as that initiated by the publication of Honest to God, where a believer airs his doubts, achieves precisely nothing according to Barth. Barth puts himself in an almost impregnable position even if it renders him incommunicado at the same time. He cannot be called upon to defend himself by reason nor will he recognise the validity of any attacks based on reason. We can only attempt to show the reasonableness of recognising some function, however limited, fulfilled by natural theology and where Barth's position is

based on Holy Scripture to show that there are other permissible interpretations.

2. Barth and St. Paul

The key New Testament passage for the natural theologian is Romans 1. 18-21. In his commentary on The Epistle to the Romans (1921) Barth allowed that this passage is evidence of natural theology but of a natural theology that is only theoretically possible. The crucial verses read as follows :

" For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse; for although they knew God they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles."⁵

It must be admitted that these verses will bear Barth's interpretation of them. Knowledge of God is theoretically possible according to this passage, but elsewhere, as we shall see, St. Paul approaches the Gentiles as if such knowledge were a real possibility. It is difficult to see how man can be "without excuse" unless there has been a real possibility of knowing God. The fact that some Gentiles, for example, Plato and Aristotle, had seen something of the truth of God suggests that the attainment of such knowledge is a real possibility.

Barth himself admitted in his commentary that

" Plato in his wisdom recognized long ago that behind the visible there lies the invisible universe which is the Origin of all concrete things."⁶

Yet in Barth's judgement when a man outside the sphere of the Word attempts to create a speculative theology he is wanting to be as God. The wrath of God is God's "No" to any effort on the part of man to save himself. Men hold the truth "imprisoned in the chains of their unrighteousness". Man exalts himself and obscures the distance between himself and God. All we know, according to Barth, is that "God is He whom we do not know".⁷ He further suggests that while man has known God in some sense, through sin he has forgotten what he was able to know. This limited knowledge of God, St. Paul tells us, comes through "the things that have been made" Barth however speaks of a knowledge of God "attainable through the simple observation of the incomprehensibility, the imperfection, the triviality of human life."⁸ This can scarcely be what St. Paul meant. Yet Barth repeats that man's unrighteousness is inexcusable " for the clearly seen facts bear witness to the everlasting divinity of God."⁹ The knowledge of God that Barth admits seems to amount to no more than the fact that God is unknowable. It is difficult to conceive that this was what St. Paul meant when he declared that God's invisible nature, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. At Lystra Paul and Barabas declared to the inhabitants :

" In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways; yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness."¹⁰

The "witness" or the "clue", as the New English Bible renders it, would be of little value if man were utterly unable to make anything of it.

Reference has already been made to the preaching of St. Paul at Athens. It is difficult to know how we are to interpret the reference to the Unknown God. If the Athenians had simply arrived at the conclusion that God is unknowable then Barth's point would be made. In speaking of the "ane onelie God" Barth declares that the principles and objects of other than Christian systems are in reality "no gods or at best gods so-called".¹¹ Yet St. Paul seems to have thought that the Athenians had a dim apprehension of the true God rather than a completely false image. At least his words, "What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you,"¹² bears this interpretation. One might almost say that they were worshipping the true God in spite of their ignorance.

One Gifford lecturer, Sir William Ramsay, gave considerable attention to the later verses :

" . . . that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find him. Yet he is not far from each one of us, for

' In him we live and move and are;'
as even some of your poets have said,

' For we are indeed his offspring.'¹³

It is generally recognised that the quotation, "For we are indeed

his offspring," comes from the poet Aratas. The passage suggests more than one poet and Ramsay followed Rendel Harris in his suggestion that, "Inhim we live and move and are," is a quotation from Epimenides but "the metrical character is disguised by transformation from the Ionic dialect to the Attic and from the second person to the third."¹⁴ If this is so then this much quoted word of St. Paul is originally a Greek thought about Zeus as was the second quotation from Aratas. Barth quotes the line, "In him we live and move and are," in his Romans as evidence that man has had a real opportunity of knowledge of God, but in his Dogmatics in Outline¹⁶ he applies the same verse to the truth of Jesus Christ:

"In this light we live and move and have our being (Acts 17.28)." Now this is permissible theological exegesis, but when St. Paul originally used the words he was evidently quoting from two Greek poets to illustrate his point that the Greeks had some knowledge of God, which was to be corrected and completed by the message of the gospel. Now according to the Confessio Scotica "the Image of God (is) utterly defaced in man," and according to Barth,

" Man has now become a tarnished mirror in which the glory of God can no longer be reflected."¹⁷

If this is so these two thoughts about God from Greek sources cannot reflect the truth of God. How inadvisable of the apostle to quote them if indeed his viewpoint coincided with that of Barth!

3. The Imago Dei

According to the book of Genesis man was made in the image and likeness of God. Thus knowledge of God would be feasible by analogy from man's knowledge of himself. According to Barth the image of God is utterly defaced in man and the traditional analogia entis is the invention of Antichrist.¹⁸ It is pointless to ask in what respects man is like God or was like God in the beginning. Rather man is appointed to be the image of God and to reflect his glory but this can only come about through Christ.¹⁹ We can know nothing of God except through Christ. We cannot start from man in our search for God.

"To 'start from man' can only mean to start with man of the lost status integretatis, that is, of the presently existing status corruptionis."²⁰

Brunner in his essay, Nature and Grace²¹, criticised Barth's dismissal of the imago Dei and the analogia entis. He agrees with much of Barth's theology but claims that there must be some "point of contact" between man and God if reconciliation is to be achieved. Further the Christian preacher must be able to find some similar "point of contact" if the gospel is to be communicated. The gist of Barth's angry "No!" to Brunner is that no such point of contact is necessary.

"The Holy Ghost, who proceeds from the Father and the Son and is therefore revealed and believed to be God, does not stand in need of any point of contact but that which he himself creates. Only retrospectively is it

possible to reflect on the way in which he "makes contact" with man, and this retrospect will ever be a retrospect upon a miracle."²²

Barth has no time for apologetics nor for what Brunner calls eristics²³. Yet at a minimum sinful man must be able to understand the message spoken to him. Man's sinfulness has not prevented him discovering truths of mathematics and science and the same basic vocabulary is used in the poetical expression of truth. We may agree with St. Anselm and Barth²⁴ when they speak of the inadequacy of language to express truth about God, but if man can be given saving knowledge by means of the foolishness of preaching, then the preacher must use words or analogies to express the truth of God. If the fourth gospel is to convey such truth then the word "Logos" on the author's lips must bear some resemblance in meaning to the word "Logos" as it is understood by the Alexandrian Jew or the Greek gentile. Even the word "Father", so precious to Barth, can only be understood by analogy. Tillich comments :

" The famous "No" of Karl Barth against any kind of natural theology, even of man's ability to ask the question of God, in the last analysis is a self-deception, as the use of human language in speaking of revelation shows."²⁶

As Brunner remarks²⁷, any kind of Christian education demands a theologia naturalis. Neither Brunner nor Tillich would say that natural theology can take a man all the way to God; indeed they would say it can't take him very far on the road at all. Nevertheless the possibility of natural theology allows for the

possibility of a saving knowledge of God. But the Confessio Scotica declares :

" Of ourselves we are not sufficient to think one gude thocht," and Barth comments :

" With faith itself comes the conclusive insight, that no one has the capacity for faith by his own effort, that is either the capacity to prepare for faith or to start it, or to persevere in it, or to perfect it."²⁸

This is qualified in his comment on Anselm, where he speaks of

" the encounter with him which can never be brought about by all our searching for God however thorough it may be, although it is only to the man who seeks God with a pure heart that this encounter comes."²⁹

Barth would say that the pure heart is not a condition wrought by man's effort but is itself the point of contact made by the Holy Spirit. Yet there are those whose experience suggests that by their own adventures of thought they have arrived at a point where they have recognised that the only way forward was by a leap of faith. It may help us if we examine in some detail the experience of one such man who has furnished autobiographical material.

C.S.Lewis described his experience in Surprised by Joy. After losing, during his adolescence, what faith he had he concluded that the universe was "a rather regrettable institution" and his experiences in the first world war confirmed his atheism. After the war he read Philosophy and English literature. He discovered that the people he admired in literature seemed to

be on the theistic side - Plato, Aeschylus, Virgil, Spenser, Milton, George MacDonald and Chesterton. Chesterton's Everlasting Man particularly impressed him and a re-reading of the Hippolytus of Euripides marked a crucial stage in his pilgrimage. One of our Gifford lecturers played his part in this development. Alexander's Space Time and Deity gave Lewis the distinction between "enjoying" and "contemplation". Briefly, contemplation means for Alexander the observation of an object. When you turn your mind from the object to the act of observing the object, you are enjoying it. You contemplate the beautiful picture, but you enjoy the contemplation. C.S. Lewis came to feel that he had been searching for the experience of joy rather than the object of joy. So the philosophers helped him in his search as he himself confesses :

" What I learned from the Idealists (and still most strongly hold) is this maxim: it is more important that Heaven should exist than that any of us should reach it.

And so the great Angler played His fish and I never dreamed that the hook was in my tongue. But two great advances had been made. Bergson had showed me necessary existence; and from Idealism I had come one step nearer to understanding the words, 'We give thanks to thee for Thy great glory.' The Norse gods had given me the first hints of it; but then I didn't believe in them, and I did believe . . . in the Absolute."³⁰

It seems that he was climbing William James's Faith-Ladder step by step. In retrospect it was more like Jacob's ladder; the Lord stood above it; the Lord was in this place and he knew it

not. Lewis did not dismiss his partial knowledge of God, but declared :

" I am one of many who have bowed in the house of the real God when I believed Him to be no more than Rimmon."³¹

If he is right in this judgement then Plato, Aeschylus, Euripides, Spinoza and Alexander had all played their part along with the Christian thinkers.

It would be foolish to assume that a man only needs to read the philosophers, decide which is the most reasonable hypothesis, and then declare his faith. This is not borne out by experience. On the other hand a man does not increase his faith by believing six incredible things every morning before breakfast like the Duchess in Alice. Faith is more than commitment to a likely hypothesis. C.S.Lewis found it so.

" Doubtless, by definition, God was Reason itself. But would He also be 'reasonable' in that other, more comfortable, sense? Not the slightest assurance on that score was offered me. Total surrender, the absolute leap in the dark, were demanded . . . In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed."³²

We must now ask if C.S.Lewis would have been in a position to make this leap of faith if he had not been prepared by his previous experience to take such a leap. While he had found no "proof" of the existence of God it can be said that he had arrived at a point where it seemed not unreasonable to admit that God was God. C.S.Lewis believed that his experiences were

signposts. At the conclusion of the book he remarks that signposts lose their importance once we have arrived at our destination, but when we are lost the sight of any signpost is a great matter. But Barth insists that we cannot prepare for faith in the slightest degree. The believer who tries to paint some signposts for the unbeliever is wasting his time!

If C.S. Lewis is at all typical of twentieth-century western man then his experience may suggest a way of approach to the unbeliever. Kant bars the way to any attempt to "prove" the existence of God and Barth is right in declaring that faith is not the conclusion of an argument, but Brunner, among others, believes that there is a place for apologetic based on reason. In the essay which incurred the wrath of Barth he says :

" There is such a thing as an intellectual and conceptual work of preparation, which clears obstacles out of the way of proclamation. Every one who carries on pastoral work among intellectuals or has the task of instructing modern youth, knows the significance of this. But the centre on which everything turns is the centre of the Theologia naturalis : the doctrine of the imago Dei and especially of responsibility. . . In the long run the Church can bear the rejection of theologia naturalis as little as its misuse. It is the task of our theological generation to find its way back to a true theologia naturalis." ³³

If Brunner is right the imago Dei is overshadowed by sin but not completely destroyed. Man's ability to see the evidence of God in nature and his capacity for revelation are not completely invalidated. When we consider the experience of a man like C.S. Lewis this seems to be a far more likely account of the situation than Barth's.

4. Barth and St. Anselm

St. Anselm began and ended his argument for the existence of God with prayer. The whole discourse is carried on in the context of faith. Barth is right when he says that we can only understand Anselm when we see that "the object of the inquiry stands over against him who inquires not as 'it' not even as 'he', but as 'thou', as the unmediated 'thou' of the Lord."³⁴ Anselm was already a believer and all he needed was the grace to think correctly about God. Barth understands Anselm's use of the word intelligere as intus legere :

" The fundamental meaning of intelligere in Anselm is legere: to reflect upon what has already been said in the Credo. In recognising and assenting to truth intelligere and credere come together and the intelligere is itself and remains a credere while the credere in and by itself, as we have seen, is also an embryonic intelligere."³⁵

For Barth the argument is a contemplation of what is believed rather than an attempt to confirm the assertions of faith. God can only be known by revelation and the fact that Anselm addresses God as "Thou" is an indication that he has already received this revelation. Being in this position and then thinking of "that than which a greater cannot be conceived" he must think of God and it is utterly impossible for him to conceive of the non-existence of God. It is possible for Anselm to conceive of the non-existence of anything else but not of God.³⁶

It is true that Anselm's position can only rightly be understood in the light of Fides Quaerens Intellectum and his use of the ontological argument, Barth warns us, must not be

confused with the use of a deceptively similar argument by Descartes and Leibniz. The arguments of Kant, Barth declares, have no bearing on the theology of Anselm.³⁷ Anselm's argument may well be in a different category from that of Descartes and Leibniz. He was following up his own principle that a Christian should believe the deep things of faith before undertaking to discuss them by reason, but that once he is established in the faith he should aim at understanding it. But if Anselm was indeed only attempting intus legere, it is difficult to see why he should have presented/three other proofs which do not grow out of faith or why he should have described his "ontological" argument as "a short way with unbelievers". This suggests an apologetic aim and it is difficult not to conclude that he was arguing from within faith to demonstrate the reasonableness of faith. This is a kind of apologetic, but apologetic for which Barth has no place.

5. Barth and Reformed Theology

Both Luther and Calvin, as we have seen, allowed that there is a knowledge of God apart from faith-knowledge. Barth criticises the reformers on this ground and regards the appeal of Calvin and Luther to a natural theology as a lapse from their general desire to see human salvation founded on the Word of God alone.³⁸ A reformed confession, he tells us, differs from all confessions based on natural theology because it recognises that God reveals Himself to Man in Jesus Christ.³⁹ But no confession unless it be eighteenth-century Deism is based on

natural theology. It cannot be said too often that natural theology is not opposed to revelation in the way in which Barth suggests it is. The pre-reformation theologians found a place for natural theology alongside revelation. Luther and Calvin, while aware of the presumptuous nature of reasoning man, allowed a carefully circumscribed place for possible knowledge of God apart from faith. It is true that there have been times - and perhaps the late nineteenth century which saw the beginning of the Gifford lectures was such a time - when natural theology made higher claims for itself. But today, perhaps due to Barthian influence, there must be few if any who regard natural theology by itself as a satisfactory foundation for religion. Barth will not allow the possibility of any reconciliation between the claims of natural theology and revelation.

" Knowledge of God according to the teaching of the Reformation does not therefore permit the man who knows to withdraw himself from God, so to speak, and to maintain an independent and secure position over against God so that from this he may form thoughts about God, which are in varying degrees true, beautiful and good. The latter procedure is that of all natural theology. One can only choose between this and the procedure of Reformed theology, one cannot reconcile them."⁴⁰

Barth is here pushing natural theology into an opposition it does not seek. Natural theology does not seek to maintain an independent and secure position over against God. Gifford lecturer after Gifford lecturer has declared that the believer cannot and does not need to prove the existence of God for

himself. Nevertheless he may examine in the light of reason what he accepts by faith and if he wishes to share his faith with others he may well attempt to demonstrate its reasonableness. Before Hume and Kant the natural theologian might ~~would~~ have attempted to prove the existence of God but now he is more likely to limit himself to showing that his belief is not unreasonable. Or again, the natural theologian may wrestle with the problem of evil simply to show that it is possible to hold the belief that God is good in the context of a world that seems to contain elements of evil. Natural theology attempts to be the ally of this other theology of which Barth writes. It is simply not true that :

" 'Natural Theology' has to make itself known, demonstrate itself and maintain itself over against this other theology by distinguishing itself from it and protesting against it."⁴¹

At the conclusion of his Gifford lectures Barth speaks again of the teaching of the Reformation as the exact opposite of Natural Theology⁴². They are only exact opposites if we set the extreme view of natural theology held by the Deists and the extreme interpretation of Reformation teaching expressed by Barth. Barth dismisses the limited admissions of Luther and Calvin as atavisms. He admits that in his own earlier days he may have had lapses; some passages in his Epistle to the Romans may be interpreted as recognising a limited scope for natural theology. Barth thus attempts to set up his own Church Dogmatics as the repository of pure Reformation theology, and to purge the

founders of Reformation theology of their ill-advised admissions. In his reply to Brunner, for instance, Barth spends some time in correcting Brunner's account of Calvin and points out⁴³ that Calvin never follows up the "Platonic and Ciceronian philosophoumena" in the introduction to the Institutes. But he cannot deny that it is there. If Calvin was indeed of Barth's mind then it was as inadvisable for him to admit a limited theologia naturalis at the outset of his Institutes as it was for St. Paul to quote the Greek poets.

6. Knowledge of God

When Barth declares that :

"God is one and only One and proves Himself to be such by His being both the Author of His own Being and the source of all knowledge of Himself."⁴⁴

he is saying something with which many advocates of natural theology would agree. Of course God must be known through himself, and likewise he would not be God unless he were, in some sense, the author of his own being. We learn later that God "does not content Himself with Himself . . . On the contrary, His glory overflows in His creating, sustaining and governing and in the world man, and in His giving to this His creation the glory of being the reflection(imago) of His own glory."⁴⁵

God is thus not only the author of his own being but author of creation. The world of nature and the world of spirit are created by God.⁴⁶ Man is created to be the image and likeness of God.⁴⁷ Thus it should follow, or so St. Paul thought, that

something of God can be known through nature. But, for Barth, man is blinded by sin and so he cannot see the truth except by the grace of God.

" Everything depends not only on the fact that God grants him grace to think correctly about him, but also on the fact that God himself comes within his system as the object of his thinking."⁴⁸

Thus God enables man to think correctly about him through revelation vouchsafed by the Holy Spirit. It is wrong to seek illumination through mystical vision or any other way. St. Augustine fell into this error in the garden at Ostia; it involves abandoning "the place where God encounters man in His revelation and where He gives Himself to be heard and seen by man."⁴⁹ It is equally wrong for man to seek God within himself or in creation. Knowledge of God comes only by the Word of God.

" We know nothing of our created state from our created state, but only through the word of God, from which we we can derive no independent, generally true items of knowledge, different from the Word of God and therefore leading up to it."⁵⁰

Thus the heavens may declare the glory of God and the firmament may show his handiwork but apart from the Word of God man cannot know this truth. It is true, as Saul Kane found, that after the encounter with the Word the world of nature speaks with a new voice, but is nature necessarily dumb before the encounter? Barth asserts that nature cannot speak of God in any voice comprehensible to man until he has encountered the Word.

Barth does not identify the Word of God and Holy Scripture, which is at the same time a work of human frailty and the work of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless the Bible is the Word of God, a miracle of God, but it is not to become a "paper Pope".

We have the strange assertion that the authors

" have still spoken the Word of God in their fallible and erring human word. It is the fact that in the Bible we can take part in this real miracle, the miracle of the grace of God to sinners, and not the idle miracle of human words which were not really human words at all, which is the foundation of the dignity and authority of the Bible."⁵¹

It is reasonable to ask on what grounds we are to differentiate between the human element and the work of the Holy Spirit. It seems that unregenerate man is in the same predicament when he attempts to read the Bible as when he tries to read the book of nature. He can read the words but he cannot grasp the meaning. There are, however, some questions he wants to ask before he commits himself to faith. An unbeliever looking at the world of nature might say, "I would like to believe and I could if only someone would show me how I can think about the problem of evil in the world and reconcile it with the idea of a good God." Similarly an unbeliever reading the Bible might puzzle over problems involving the historicity of the accounts. Barth tells us that the scientific study of the Bible can yield some results :

" One is entitled to expect from it that it will clarify the whole human form of the witness to Christ

in the Old and New Testaments, throwing light on its linguistic, literary, historical and religious-historical aspects."⁵²

But we must not be too optimistic for we learn before the paragraph ends that scientific study practised by unbelief will make a very poor job of it. Only in the Church can Holy Scripture be rightly interpreted. Barth asks the question and answers it :

" How could revelation ever be recognised as the divine content of that testimony except through revelation? But so to recognise revelation through revelation means to recognise it by revelation awakening one's faith."⁵³

This answer is irrefragable, but if analysed it is simply saying that we recognise revelation in Holy Scripture because the Holy Spirit has enabled us to recognise revelation in Holy Scripture. In any other sphere of knowledge we reserve the right of reason to criticise. Even in the sphere of art where reason makes no claim to be able to produce a work of art there is a place for the literary, dramatic or art critic. We enjoy the play or the poem aesthetically on the one hand and on the other we assess it critically. No doubt the author would not use the vehicle of poetry or drama if he could say the same thing in prose, but it is reasonable to ask, "What is the author trying to say?" and to expect an answer in prose. This prose answer may be the means whereby a man is led to a real appreciation of the poem or the play. The natural theologian might claim such a critical and explanatory function in respect

to revelation. But Barth will not allow even such a limited function.

" One may obey or not obey, believe or not believe what is called revelation in the Bible - either is open - but one cannot from another standpoint perceive, or from another standpoint take one's bearings, as to whether ⁵⁴ it has really taken place and whether its content is true."

Barth's position might be acceptable if everyone who read the Bible through the eyes of faith were able to come to the same conclusion as to what precisely is revealed. The Jehovah's Witness tells us to have faith and read the Bible and we shall know the truth. Likewise the Latter Day Saint bids us believe and read the Word. These interpretations are much more naive than that of Barth, but they all make the basic error of not allowing reason any critical function. Now if a theological position is based on a mistranslation of the original text this can be corrected by any pagan scholar who has studied the languages involved. True, he may not be able to show positively what the Bible is revealing, but by pointing out mistranslations he can correct linguistic misinterpretations. Further, the impartial investigator can point out inconsistencies. If reason is not allowed any function as judge or arbiter there is no means of judging whether Barth or the Jehovah's Witness is the correct interpreter of scripture. It can be admitted that reason does not make the revelation possible but it offers a means of assessing "true" and "false"

revelations. To a limited extent reason can do just what Barth declares is impossible; it can provide another standpoint from which to take one's bearings. Reason is of course as fallible as any other human faculty, but it is the best instrument to hand, and we may re-affirm our earlier conclusion that reason and revelation are not necessarily opposed.

The advocate of this limited natural theology would agree with Barth when he says that we cannot know God except through God, but he would claim that God reveals himself in a general way through nature. Such a natural theologian, looking at nature, tries to discover meaning and purpose in the universe and attempts to find evidence for the existence of God. He is not likely in these days to claim that he has found conclusive evidence, but circumstantial evidence is still evidence. There is in Scots law a verdict of "Not proven", one with which Lord Gifford would be very familiar. It was this verdict that John Laird gave at the end of his lectures. It was this verdict that Kant and Hume gave in declaring that it is equally impossible to prove or disprove the existence of God. But a verdict of "Not proven" might also be correct in a situation where there is some evidence in favour of the existence of God but where it is not strong enough to command a positive verdict to that effect. Barth is right in saying that we cannot reach knowledge of God in this way, but for some people this kind of argument may be necessary as a preparation for faith. Such dialogue will not create a living faith, but it may offer a

live option. If this is so Barth is wrong in declaring that natural theology cannot prepare the way for faith. Before C.S.Lewis could make his final act of commitment belief had to become a live option.

7. The Philosopher's God

" God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob," wrote Pascal in the testimony stitched up in his doublet, " Not of philosophers and savants." Barth draws the same distinction as any man of religion would. Barth goes further and denies the identity of the God of Abraham and the God of the natural theologian. The god of the philosophers is an idol. When St. Thomas attempted to prove the existence of the First Cause, the Prime Mover or Necessary Being he was able to make the straightforward equation at the end of each of his five ways because he was not only a philosopher but a man of religion. It was as if he said, "Reason leads us to the concept of First Cause, Prime Mover or Necessary Being; faith leads us to belief in the One and Only God; therefore this One and Only God must be First Cause, Prime Mover and Necessary Being." Natural theology had thus posed the problems involved in cause and effect, motion and being, and had within its limits produced an understandable answer. But one does not worship the Prime Mover, First Cause or Necessary Being; one worships God. So the natural theologian thinks about God while the man of religion worships God. In Buber's language, the man of religion is involved in an I-Thou relationship; the theologian is limited to speaking

in terms of an I-It relationship. There seems to be no reason why the same man should not be able at times to think about God in terms of natural theology and at other times to worship God and experience the encounter of which Barth speaks. Barth, however, interprets every human effort to understand God as a projection of man himself. If we accept the findings of natural theology then God, says Barth, "would have betrayed himself to be one of those principles underlying human systems and finally identical with man."⁵⁵ This is not necessarily so. All that need be admitted is that God reveals himself as creator in the natural world and that man as part of that creation shares the imago Dei, even if it is darkened by sin. Man, looking at nature through the eyes of reason, forms the concept of a First Cause or a Designer. He identifies this concept with the non-rational concept of God and worships. He is not projecting his own image so much as seeing through a glass darkly.

The image of God seen by man has often appeared to be a sadly distorted image. St. Paul saw how far short man had fallen in his attempt to picture God without the aid of revelation.

" Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles." ⁵⁶

Barth lays the blame for all this error upon sin, but there are two possible sources of such error. We may admit that one source of error is sin, but the second source of error lies

in man's inability to find language adequate for the discussion. Man has to talk in a language he understands and so is driven to use analogies, which may well lead him to anthropomorphism or theriomorphism, both of which were condemned by St. Paul. Even St. Paul was driven to describe God as "immortal" which can only have meaning in the light of the mortality known to man. St. Paul criticised the gentiles because they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling men and beasts, but some centuries before, Xenophanes had criticised and dismissed such anthropomorphism and theriomorphism. Indeed the criticisms of Xenophanes are strangely akin to the judgements of ~~Isiah~~ Isaiah on the gods of the nations. ~~Isiah~~ Isaiah of course was passing his judgement in the light of his knowledge of the living God while Xenophanes was pitting his poor human reason against contemporary superstitions. If Isaiah was right so was Xenophanes. Even though he might not create a religion he was able to criticise the religion presented to him.

In his Dogmatics Barth raises the question of those outside the covenant who appear to have a real knowledge of God. He gives the examples of Balaam, Rahab, Ruth and Naaman and takes ~~Me~~ M~~ach~~izedek as their symbolic representative. Two of his comments deserve note. He writes of them :

" They are strangers, and yet as such adherents; strangers who as such have some very important and incisive things to say to the children of the household; strangers who from the most unexpected distances come right into the apparently closed circle of divine election

and calling and carry out a kind of commission, fulfil an office for which there is not name, but the content of which is quite obviously a service which they have to render."⁵⁷

This is exactly what the natural theologian would wish to say of the Greeks; the office and function is not nameless as far as the Greeks are concerned but is quite conveniently described as natural theology. Barth is quick to close the gap in case we should surmise that those non-Israelites had a natural knowledge of God, and he adds :

" It is not on the basis of natural knowledge of God and a relationship with God that all these strangers play their striking role. What happens is rather that in them Jesus Christ claims Himself to be the great Samaritan: as it were, in a second and outer circle of His revelation, which by its very nature can only be hinted at."⁵⁸

If the priest of Salem can be included in such a second and outer circle of revelation, might we not make a similar plea for Xenophanes, Plato and Aristotle? Have they - and many others - not had important and incisive things to say to the children of the household?

Barth, however, insists that any deity worshipped by man apart from the God revealed in Jesus Christ is an idol. The philosopher, positing an Absolute, is erecting an idol. The Greek thinker, dismissing polytheism, is under the influence of "the charm of the idea of mathematical unity."⁵⁹ If one accepts the truth that the living God reveals himself, it is understandable that he should make his one-ness known to a

bedouin sheikh in the middle east. It is more difficult to see why the same God should not be thought of as revealing himself to earnest thinkers of another nation who are seeking to understand the meaning of the world through reason. Yet any attempt to find God through reason is condemned by Barth as presumptuous. In his reply to Brunner Barth used the analogy of a man being rescued from the sea by a competent swimmer. To suggest that the man might have helped himself by swimming a few strokes is heresy. In the absence of any knowledge of God given through revelation what was the Greek to do? Was he presumptuous to try to swim for himself a little? The earnest thinker is not necessarily erecting a tower of Babel or storming the gates of heaven. He may be a humble seeker after truth who believes that his reason has been given to him as a faculty to be used. He may indeed become presumptuous but so may the other kind of theologian who declares that he alone has the true revelation and the correct interpretation of the true revelation. The natural theologian has no monopoly of presumption. And it may well be that the other kind of theologian has no monopoly of the knowledge of God. The ancient philosophers did not make any distinction between the God of philosophy and the God of worship. The advocate of natural theology today would make that distinction but he claims that in talking about the God of philosophy he is saying something meaningful about the God of religion. Otherwise Barth is right in saying that natural theology is not about anything!

8. A Possible Natural Theology

Barth resolutely avoids defining the natural theology to which he is opposed. This constitutes a considerable problem for the defender of natural theology. Brunner attempted to set out Barth's position in respect to natural theology in six theses⁶⁰, but Barth refused to acknowledge them as an expression of his views⁶¹. He holds that natural theology does not exist "as an entity capable of becoming a separate subject within what I consider to be real theology - not even for the sake of being rejected."⁶² It is an abyss to be avoided rather than explored. So he steadfastly refuses to identify his foe or to refute natural theology except by the positive assertion of his other theology. At the outset of his Gifford lectures he promised to speak positively without losing sight of the problems of natural theology⁶³, and at the end he claimed that there is "no important statement in the lectures which the representative of Natural Theology can avoid considering as the direct opposite of his own tenets."⁶⁴ But as we have insisted there is no reason why natural theology should be relentlessly opposed to this other theology. Natural theology does not deny the possibility of this other theology in the way in which this other theology of Barth's denies the possibility of natural theology. St. Thomas was able to reconcile a theology of revelation and a theology based on human reasoning. To a limited degree Luther and Calvin made the same acknowledgment. The advocate of natural theology, if he is a Christian, will wish

to acknowledge the truth of so much that Barth has to say, but he will be as resolute in the defence of natural theology as Barth is in its denial. We will now specify the kind of natural theology we are prepared to defend.

(1) Natural theology, in the form in which we are prepared to defend it, does not claim to be able to establish a religion within the limits of mere reason. It is not therefore an alternative to a religion grounded on revelation. Natural theology might have made such a claim in earlier centuries but no modern advocate of natural theology would press the claim. If we can judge from our knowledge of Lord Gifford's personal faith, what he had in mind was not that the existence of God should be proved as a rational inference from the data of the universe but that all the problems involved in any possible knowledge of God should be investigated by reason unhampered by the vetoes of authoritarian religion. Almost certainly he privately hoped that the kind of faith he himself held would be shown to be reasonable. He was anxious to lead others to a "true and felt" knowledge of God and deemed natural theology to be a fit instrument. Raymond of Sebonde made extravagant claims for his theologia naturalis but no modern advocate of natural theology would claim to be able to lead a man to God by natural theology "in less than a month and without trouble". In this sense natural theology has never been the same since the days of Hume. Contemporary natural theology has learned

humility and the natural theologian carefully circumscribes his task.

(2) Natural theology does not deny "special" revelation ; it depends for its existence on the possibility of revelation.

Lord Gifford never denied the possibility of general or special revelation, nor does the natural theologian. In an effort to make the proposed investigation impartial appeal to supposed exceptional or so-called miraculous revelation was forbidden. The distinction between special and general revelation has never been satisfactory and as early as 1890 John Caird pronounced the distinction to be "arbitrary and misleading".⁶⁵ It is tempting to take one of the extreme positions, either holding that all revelation is general or declaring with Barth that all revelation is special. There can be no hard and fast distinction. We may devise a rough and ready distinction if we speak of natural theology when we focus attention upon God's approach to man through nature and man's quest for God through human reason and we speak of theology (unqualified) when we focus attention upon God's approach to man through grace and man's acceptance of that grace through faith. The story of natural theology might then well be the adventures of man in search of God while the other theology tells of the advent of God in search of man. Yet there is grace in nature and nature in grace; there is faith in reason and reason in faith.

(3) Natural theology does not deny revelation in Scripture and indeed claims scriptural support. The natural theologian may well allow that there are truths of God not accessible to reason which are made known to men of faith through scripture. He also asserts that such truths must stand up to the criticisms of reason. The Bible, recognised by Barth as a human document, must be judged as a human document; it cannot claim immunity from criticism. Both the advocate and the opponent of natural theology may be guilty of what Leonard Hodgson called "eclectic quotation"⁶⁶, but the presence of natural theology is easier to prove than its absence. We have already examined the Pauline evidence. We can find further evidence in the Psalms,⁶⁷ and if we turn to the teaching of Jesus we find frequent appeal to the analogies provided by nature. Canon Raven wrote :

" If anyone denies that there is evidence of the Spirit's presence in nature he will find it difficult to explain how it is that Jesus, in bringing to life His disciples, uses not the Law and the Prophets but flowers and birds and little children, the sowing of a field, the growth of a tree, the leavening of bread and the daily work of men and women. If nature is, as Dr. Barth insists, corrupt and meaningless, if natural theology is non-existent, it is strange that Jesus spent so much time on it."⁶⁸

It should be added that natural theology only appeals to the authority of scripture because it is on this authority that it is opposed.

(4) Natural theology reserves the right to stand outside the realm of revelation and criticise from the standpoint of reason.

We saw in our brief discussion of Barth's Anselm : Fides Quaerens Intellectum that St. Anselm was arguing in the context of faith but it also appeared that he was making the attempt, theoretically at least, to stand outside his faith to examine its implications in the light of reason. He regarded this examination of faith by reason as an obligation. William Temple, in many ways an admirer of Barth's contribution to modern theology, was constrained to write :

" To deny that revelation can, and in the long run must, on pain of becoming manifest as superstition, vindicate its claim by satisfying reason and conscience, is fanatical."⁶⁹

Any individual is capable of believing and reasoning. When a statement is presented to him he cannot separate these two faculties. If the statement is arrant nonsense belief is an impossibility. Even if for a time his critical faculties are silenced by an emotional experience he will ultimately either reject his faith or come to believe that it is reasonable, all things considered. If we dare to ask what lies behind the publication of volume after volume of Barth's Dogmatics must not the answer be that it is a sustained attempt to show that the position adopted by Barth is, all things considered, reasonable ?

(5) Natural theology is a pre-requisite of any apologetic.

This was the point made most strongly by Brunner in his attack on Barth. As we have seen, the natural theologian can stand outside the realm of revelation as critic ; he may also stand outside as advocate. Even if it is admitted that the gospel is ultimately a proclamation rather than an argument, the advocate must still meet people where they are and address them in a language they can understand. Brunner pleaded for a natural theology which would point to such evidence of the existence of God as we have and which would prepare the way intellectually and conceptually for the proclamation of the gospel. It would be a mistake to conclude that it was Lord Gifford's intention that his lecturers should provide such preparatory apologetic. He hoped for more. He expressed the wish that such knowledge of God as might be provided by natural theology should be diffused among the whole population of Scotland, but he was only cherishing a lingering nineteenth-century hope that reason might be able to provide the answer to every question asked by man. He was undoubtedly out of patience with the dogmatic utterances of the churches, and wanted religious assertions brought out into the fresh air and subjected to the searching light of reason. Even if natural theology cannot produce the kind of apologetic Lord Gifford hoped for, it remains true that there are many problems of theology that can be discussed without resort to special revelation and in some generations problems that must be

discussed before any proclamation is comprehensible. Natural theology will not inevitably lead to faith but it may prepare the way for faith.

(6) Natural theology is not necessarily a purely human effort.

Barth's final attack on natural theology⁷⁰ is directed against it on the grounds that it is a purely human effort. The Confessio Scotica, like St. Anselm's Proslogion, begins and ends in prayer. In contrast Barth thinks of natural theology as a purely human effort. Now if the chemist or the astronomer is a religious man he will believe that it is God's universe he is investigating even while he brings to it all the impartiality of scientific method. He too may pray at the beginning and end of his work; his personal religious faith may be deepened by reason of his scientific knowledge of the universe. Similarly the natural theologian may be a man of faith; for the reasons we have noted he may wish to stand outside his faith and examine it in the light of reason. He too can pray at the beginning and ending of his work. His faith may be deepened by such an examination and he may be enabled to share his faith with others.

This carefully circumscribed natural theology we are prepared to defend against the onslaught of Barth.

Part 3.Chapter 2.Reference Notes

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- 2 Church Dogmatics (hereafter C.D.) Vol.II, Pt.1, p.4.
- 3 Anselm : Fides Quaerens Intellectum, p.17
- 4 C.D. II.1., p.9
- 5 Romans, 1. 19-23 (RSV)
- 6 Barth, Epistle to the Romans, p.46.
- 7 Ibid. p.45.
- 8 Ibid. p.47.
- 9 Ibid. p.47.
- 10 Acts, 14. 16-17 (RSV)
- 11 G.7, p.19
- 12 Acts, 17. 23 (RSV)
- 13 Acts, 17. 27-28 (RSV)
- 14 G.82, pp.33-5.
- 15 Barth, Epistle to the Romans, p.47.
- 16 Barth, Dogmatics in Outline, 1949, p.25.
- 17 G.7, p.50.
- 18 C.D. I.1. p. x.
- 19 G.7, p.50.
- 20 C.D. I.1. p.148.
- 21 Brunner's Nature and Grace and Barth's reply No! were published in an English translation with an introduction by John Baillie in 1946 under the title, Natural Theology. The original essays were written in 1934.
- 22 Natural Theology, p.121.
- 23 C.D. I.1. p.28
- 24 Anselm : Fides Quaerens Intellectum, p.29.
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- 35 Ibid. p.40
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- 37 Ibid. p.171.
- 38 G.7, p. 8.
- 39 G.7, p.57.
- 40 G.7, pp.103f.
- 41 G.7, p. 6.
- 42 G.7, p.243.
- 43 Natural Theology, p.106.
- 44 G.7, p.19.
- 45 G.7, p.38.
- 46 G.7, p.39.
- 47 G.7, p.41.
- 48 Anselm : Fides Quaerens Intellectum, p.39.
- 49 C.D. II.1. p.11.
- 50 C.D. I.1. p.148.
- 51 C.D. I.2. p.530.
- 52 G.7, p.67.
- 53 G.7, p.67.
- 54 C.D. I.1. p.351
- 55 G.7, p.20.
- 56 Romans, 1. 22-23 (RSV)
- 57 C.D. I.2. p.425.
- 58 C.D. I.2. p.426.
- 59 G.7, pp.20f.
- 60 Natural Theology, pp.20f.
- 61 Ibid. p.74.
- 62 Ibid. p.75.
- 63 G.7, p.10.
- 64 G.7, p.243.
- 65 G.22, Vol.1. p.13.
- 66 G.49, Vol.2. p. 6.
- 67 Psalm 104, et al.
- 68 G.83, Vol.2, pp.151f.
- 69 G.95, p.396.
- 70 G.7, pp.243ff.

Chapter Three

Philosophy and Faith

1.	The Phenomenon of Religion	page 444
2.	Faith and Knowledge	448
3.	Can a man of faith be a natural theologian?	452
4.	Can an unbeliever be a natural theologian ?	453
5.	The Impotence of Natural Theology	454
6.	Christian Philosophy	456
7.	Other Possible Names	459
	Reference Notes	460

1. The Phenomenon of Religion

In calling theological formulae secondary products William James recognised that without religious feelings and mystical experiences man would not have needed to frame a philosophical theology or assert a faith.

"Men would have begun with animistic explanations of natural fact, and criticised these away into scientific ones, as they actually have done."¹

The fact that people have experiences that they describe as religious is part of the data which any investigator must take into account. William James was the first of the Gifford lecturers to recognise the need for an impartial psychological examination of what is described as religious experience. As he discovered for himself, there are many varieties of such experience. Such experiences sometimes occur spontaneously, sometimes as the outcome of ascetic discipline, and sometimes as the result of the administration of nitrous oxide. Such experiences vary also in "depth". Most people have experienced at some time or another a vague sense of the "numinous", which may or may not be given a religious interpretation. Some people find relief from a deep sense of guilt in an experience of forgiveness. To some there comes at times a joy or ecstasy, which again may or may not be given a religious interpretation. Mystics, as we have seen, have an overwhelming sense of having caught a glimpse of the meaning of life yet find the greatest difficulty in sharing the secret. William James's study left

him in no doubt that for the mystic himself the experience is authoritative. Whatever conclusion others come to, the mystic believes that he has received a revelation of a new depth of truth.

James, however, was too much of a realist to be misled by the psychological data. In discussing saintliness, he declared:

" The fruits of religion . . . are, like all human products, liable to corruption by excess. Common sense must judge them."²

Common sense is implicit in natural theology. The natural theologian initially brings common sense to bear on what are claimed as "revelations". This does not mean that we dismiss everything that does not tally with common sense, but at least common sense makes us look twice (or more) at the unusual. It is clear that one of the functions of natural theology is the impartial assessment of religious experience.

The natural theologian has usually been expected to make a more positive contribution. In his closing lectures William James turned to the consideration of the vital question :

" Can philosophy stamp a warrant of veracity upon the religious man's sense of the divine ? "³

In his assessment of what philosophy can't do, William James is the complete pre-Barthian Barthian. His negative answer to the question is worthy of full quotation :

" What religion reports . . . always purports to be a fact of experience: the divine is actually present,

religion says, and between it and ourselves relations of give and take are actual. If definite perceptions of fact like this cannot stand upon their own feet, surely abstract reasoning cannot give them the support they are in need of. Conceptual processes can class facts, define them, interpret them; but they do not produce them, nor can they reproduce their individuality. There is always a plus, a thisness, which feeling alone can answer for. Philosophy in this sphere is thus a secondary function, unable to warrant faith's veracity. . .

In all sad sincerity I think we must conclude that the attempt to demonstrate by purely intellectual processes the truth of the deliverances of direct religious experience is absolutely hopeless."⁴

He goes on to say, and here he parts company with the Barthian, that there is a service philosophy can perform "if she will abandon metaphysics and deduction for criticism and induction."⁵ By probing and questioning philosophy can eliminate the local and the accidental from religious formulations. By setting the findings of natural science over against religious affirmations, philosophy can purify the latter of the scientifically absurd. By use of the method of hypothesis philosophy may test some of the assertions of religious faith. William James does not use the term natural theology, but William Temple was quite prepared to describe this exercise as natural theology. Thus :

" Natural Theology should be the criticism of actual religion and of actual religious beliefs, irrespective of their supposed origin and therefore independently of any supposed act or word of Divine Revelation, conducted with full understanding of what is criticised, yet with

the complete relentlessness of scientific enquiry."⁶

At a minimum then the task of natural theology is one of clarification as John Laird suggested⁷ or a matter of construing rather than constructing religion as William Wallace put it.⁸ Richard Kroner described it as the science of the problematic idea of God.⁹

In the course of the years the natural theologian has learned from Hume, even if the lesson had to be repeated by his successors, that he can neither prove nor demonstrate truths of religion. Because he wants to talk sense about religion he will be willing to listen to the scientist or the logical positivist or indeed anyone who is concerned with reaching truth. Lord Gifford revealed what he considered to be the true spirit of natural theology when he declared that the lecturers "may be of any religion or way of thinking, or, as it is sometimes said, they may be of no religion, or they may be so-called sceptics or agnostics or freethinkers, provided only that . . . they be able, reverent men, true thinkers, sincere lovers of and earnest inquirers after truth." Lord Gifford was right in thinking that the cause of natural theology would be served by such widespread and impartial enquiry. The natural theologian is one who thinks about God rather than one who claims to know about God. In his thinking about God he will welcome the contribution of the psychologist, the student of comparative religion, the sociologist, the historian and the philosopher, for if he talks about God and religion he desires

above all to talk meaningfully. He wants to talk sense even if he does not define sense in terms of verifiability. The natural theologian defines sense in terms of coherence and claims that there is nothing inherently contradictory in the idea of God's existence. So in claiming the right to discuss problems of God's nature and existence he pleads not guilty to the positivist charge that he is talking nonsense, though it must be admitted that, as an individual, he is as liable to talk nonsense as any philosopher. The natural theologian cannot provide proof of religious propositions but he can subject them to assiduous analysis and careful scrutiny, using all the means at his disposal.

2. Faith and Knowledge

We have said that the natural theologian is the man who thinks about God, while the religious man claims to have knowledge of God. The use of the word "knowledge" to categorise religious certainty has been the cause of much ambiguity. The use of the word "know" in the statement, "I know that William the Conqueror came to England in 1066," is very different from the usage in the religious affirmation, "I know that my Redeemer lives." Historical evidence can be produced for the former; the latter is ultimately an assertion of faith. Lord Gifford himself contributed to the ambiguity when he asked for true and felt knowledge (not merely nominal knowledge) of God. He was assuming that true and felt knowledge could be reached as a result of a series of lectures. If the natural theologians of an earlier generation had been successful in what they essayed,

then they would have produced - what some of them thought they had produced - verified knowledge of God's existence. Such knowledge, if it were at all possible, would only be factual knowledge of God's existence - what Lord Gifford called nominal knowledge. But the religious man claims that his "knowledge" is more than this. Knowing about William the Conqueror is knowledge of a matter of fact; knowing about God is a matter of faith.

Many of the Gifford lecturers have seen the importance of this distinction, but the distinction has not always been as clear as it might have been, since the one word "knowledge" has been used to describe fact-certainty and faith-certainty. John Baillie followed Tillich's distinction between knowledge of truth and knowledge of reality. Knowledge of truth is in principle verifiable. Knowledge of reality is only verifiable in the sense that one person can commend his faith to another. We can argue about knowledge of truth; the best we can hope to do about our knowledge of reality is to put the other person in a position where he can see the truth as we do.

" Knowledge of reality," says Tillich, "has never the certitude of complete evidence. . . Every knowledge of reality by the human mind has the character of higher or lower probability."¹⁰

John Macmurray distinguished between scientific knowledge of things and personal knowledge of other human beings. Our knowledge of God is in the realm of the personal.

It might be well to reserve the term 'knowledge' for our knowledge of verifiable truths and to use the term faith for the knowledge of reality apprehended by the believer. This may prove a useful distinction so long as it does not give the impression that faith is utterly opposed to knowledge and that the believer can believe what he likes. Faith does not conflict with knowledge but transcends it. R.B.Perry expressed the relationship in this way :

" Faith is an extension beyond knowledge. From knowledge faith learns where and how to look, the unknown - the not impossible - takes its cue from the actually known.

Faith, therefore, is not blind. It does not ignore theoretical evidence; it does not fly in the face of facts or turn its back on them. There can be no justification for a belief which is contrary to the evidence. Faith is a belief which agrees with the evidence as far as it goes, but goes further. It lacks proof, but it may nevertheless be true and certain; for . . . neither truth nor certainty depend on proof."¹¹

Sometimes faith has been described as the acceptance of a likely hypothesis, but if this were all it would be no more than a judgment of probability. It is more than a resolution to act "as if" the belief were true. It is the basing of the whole of life upon what Brunner calls¹² the "faith-truth". It involves a belief that there is a reality corresponding to the "faith-truth". "I cannot have faith in God," wrote John Watson¹³, "without having the conviction that he is not a mere figment of my imagination." Faith thus appears to combine elements of belief and knowledge. A man believes with his heart and his head. His heart gives him

a certainty of its own even though his head tells him there is no certainty. "The concept of faith," says John Baillie¹⁴, "always contains both the idea of knowing and the idea of not knowing fully." He further describes faith as "a mode of primary apprehension."¹⁵ It is not an inference from religious experience but is rather the cognitive element in that experience.¹⁶

Other Gifford lecturers have expressed the distinction between faith and knowledge by asserting that faith yields a more complete picture of reality than can be given by scientific analysis. Richard Kroner, as we have seen, linked faith with imagination. Imagination, for Kroner, is the instrument of religious insight. The sober intellect analyses and sees the world in part. The poet's description, he claims, comes nearer to reality than the scientist's.

" Imagination binds together what the thinking mind separates : or more precisely : it maintains the original unity of the elements separated by abstract thought."¹⁷

Because this is so faith rather than abstract thought is authoritative in the sphere of religion. Kroner claims that no abstract proof of God's existence is possible or even necessary.

" Imagination furnishes the means through which faith solves the problems that reason alone is unable to solve. God is a God of faith, not of thought. He appears in the kingdom of the imagination, not in the system of categories; He appears on Mount Sinai; in the burning bush, in the still small voice, not in the absolute idea.

The knowledge of God is a knowledge immanent in faith; it cannot be made logical and conceptual."¹⁸

This view confirms the conclusions reached in our discussion of mystical insight. The mystic claims that he is seeing the wholeness of reality while the scientist's picture is partial.

It is precisely because faith has a cognitive element or, in Kroner's phrase, there is a knowledge immanent in faith, that natural theology has any point of contact with faith. If no interpretation were given to the religious ecstasy and no meaning to the moment of vision and no claim made that faith reflects reality then there would be no work for the natural theologian. But while it is claimed that there is meaning in religious propositions and while faith claims to be relevant to reality the natural theologian claims the right to investigate and analyse even if he be impotent himself to construct a religion or to prove the existence of any deity.

3. Can a man of faith be a natural theologian ?

We have spoken so far as if the natural theologian were an independent assessor of religious truth, who could examine the evidence impartially. The accusation brought so often against Gifford lecturers is that they are misusing philosophy to justify a faith that they hold for quite other reasons, and it must be admitted that the vast majority of Gifford lecturers have been believers, who have accepted the Christian faith in one form or another. This need not necessarily be a bar to the natural

theologian. The believer at least has some understanding of the language of faith and can offer that sympathetic criticism that William Temple thought was necessary. If he is an honest man he will do his utmost to think clearly and impartially. He will be as anxious as any impartial observer to distinguish between faith and credulity. It will be no part of his desire to shelter his "faith" from the rigours of criticism. He will be mindful of Whitehead's dictum that reason is the safeguard of the objectivity of religion. There is no reason why the man of faith should not also be a natural theologian. Just as the scientist subjects his "hunches" to the test of reason, so the believer can exercise this faculty of self-criticism.

4. Can an unbeliever be a natural theologian ?

The unbeliever, whether he be atheist or agnostic, can also discuss what to him will be the problematic idea of God. He may even discuss it sympathetically as an anthropologist can discuss the habits and customs of simple folk without sharing their assumptions. If the natural theologian is one who thinks about God rather than one who claims to know about God, then there is no reason why the unbeliever should not be described as a natural theologian, though he himself might prefer another title. The study he is engaged in is certainly natural theology in the sense we have described it.

The unbeliever, however, cannot do natural theology in a vacuum. Without living religion there might be a study called metaphysics but not natural theology in the sense of thinking

about God. Metaphysics may produce the concept of a Prime Mover or a First Cause but the concept of God arises from religion. If it is said that Aristotle's assertions concerning the Prime Mover have a religious ring about them, it can only be that his intellectual efforts to understand the nature of reality were accompanied by a religious awareness of God. When the unbeliever investigates the problematic idea of God he may well be performing a service of criticism and clarification for the believer. He may ~~also~~ shake the faith of the believer, but this in its way may also be a service, for the honest believer, capable of some depth of thought, has no wish to hold on to a faith that is not intellectually respectable. The criticisms of unbelief can benefit religion as Lord Gifford asserted when he expressly allowed that agnostics and freethinkers might be appointed as lecturers. Yet for believer or unbeliever natural theology has no meaning unless it is set over against the assertions of faith.

5. The Impotence of Natural Theology

It may seem then that natural theology is like a rocking chair; it gives you something to do but it doesn't get you anywhere. By itself it is impotent to produce knowledge of God; there is no Gospel of Natural Theology. Set over against faith ~~is~~ its raison d'être becomes apparent. Tillich reminds us that in a world whose foundations are shaking believer and unbeliever alike ask the existential questions. Natural theology frames the questions but cannot find the answers. The natural theologian may offer metaphysical constructions or reasonable

postulates but unless they are touched with the fire of religion they have no power to satisfy. Tillich saw no possibility of an answer arising from the question itself, at least, no final and satisfying answer. The believer is the one who, having asked the question, accepts the answer given in revelation.

Now, while no-one in these days believes that unaided reason can scale the heights of heaven, Tillich's analysis is too simple. Natural theology asks the questions and revelatory answers are offered. But then natural theology asks further questions and further answers are offered, and so on ad infinitum. Faith flourishes or fades by reason of the persistent questioning, criticising and clarifying that natural theology affords. Natural theology provides the meeting point for faith and reason, and offers an opportunity for a continuing dialogue between belief and unbelief.

The natural theologian who is a believer desires to probe and clarify his faith. For this purpose he may well stand outside his own faith. If as a man of faith he wishes to commend his faith to the unbeliever then natural theology will provide the point of contact. If he has learned the lesson of Hume he will not expect more of natural theology than it is able to offer. But it can offer more than sophistry and illusion. It is the determined effort of the believer to talk sense about his faith. For the unbeliever it is the determined effort to find out anything that can be found out concerning the problematic idea of God through the examination of religious phenomena and

the persistent questioning of faith. It will not lead the unbeliever to a position of faith, but it may lead him to the point where he sees that the only hope of finding a satisfying answer to his questions lies in faith acceptance. As William Temple concluded :

" Natural Theology ends in a hunger for the Divine Revelation which it began by excluding from its purview. Rightly sifting with relentless criticism every argument, it knows what manner of Voice that must be which shall promise relief to mankind; but that Voice is not its own."¹⁹

It should be added that natural theology may also lead to a judgment that the revelatory answers offered by faith are simply inadequate. Unless the natural theologian is prepared to take this risk he is only pretending to examine religion impartially.

6. Christian Philosophy

We have spoken so far of the man of faith. In the western world and in the Christian era the man of faith interested in natural theology has been the Christian. It is not surprising that the attempt to reconcile the insights of faith and philosophy should be described as Christian Philosophy. St. Paul described the Christian faith as a new kind of wisdom and Justin Martyr chose the term "philosophy" to describe the new way of life he adopted on his conversion. Is Christian Philosophy a possible description for a study that can include and transcend the bounds of the old natural theology ?

In his Gifford lectures Etienne Gilson concluded that there might well be something called Christian Philosophy, based on

the dual findings of philosophy and faith. He says :

" In so far as the believer bases his affirmations on the intimate conviction gained from faith he remains purely and simply a believer, he has not yet entered the gates of philosophy; but when among his beliefs he finds some that are capable of becoming objects of science then he becomes a philosopher, and if it is to the Christian faith that he owes this new philosophical insight, he becomes a Christian philosopher."²⁰

In such Christian Philosophy the attempt is made to keep the elements of faith and reason distinct. Gilson adds :

" I call Christian, every philosophy which, although keeping the two orders formally distinct, nevertheless considers the Christian revelation as an indispensable auxiliary to reason."²¹

In certain spheres the so-called Christian Philosopher will not be discernibly different from any other philosopher. The problems he discusses will be such as face any philosopher. In problems concerning God and immortality he will turn to the insights offered by faith.

In a recent work, An Essay in Christian Philosophy²², Dom Illtyd Trethowan applied the title Christian Philosophy to what seems, at first sight, to be very much the kind of discipline we have called natural theology. The Christian philosopher, we are told, "uses the philosopher's tools and no others."²³ He meets the non-Christian philosopher on common ground. He nevertheless recognises the limitations of unaided reason and acknowledges that some philosophical questions can

only be answered by an appeal to faith. Christian philosophy then appears to be the honest attempt to philosophise about God and the world as far as this can be done independently of faith with the recognition that there are limits beyond which a resort to faith is necessary. If it is true that the distinctive aim of the philosopher²⁴ is to give a coherent account of the universe as a whole, taking adequate account of all the fundamental aspects of the whole, then the Christian philosopher cannot, even for the purposes of philosophy, pretend that the revelation he believes in does not exist. Christian philosophy would then be the attempt to create a metaphysical system which makes sense of all the data of the universe including the Christian revelation. There seems to be no objection to describing such a study as Christian Philosophy.

In spite of similarities this is not quite the same as natural theology. Natural theology maintains a greater independence. It recognises and depends for its existence upon the fact that there is such a thing as faith, but it sets itself over against faith to question, to criticise and to clarify. If natural theology makes metaphysical ventures they are in the nature of experimentations based on a feasible hypothesis. The natural theologian attempts to discover whether the findings of faith will indeed fit in with knowledge gained from other spheres of investigation. He is thus able to test, and at times to demonstrate, the reasonableness of faith. Natural theology has obviously much in common with Christian Philosophy but they are

by no means identical.

7. Other Possible Names

The natural theology we are defending is a much less ambitious study than the natural theology of earlier days and it has been suggested that we should dispense with the name.

Philosophy of Religion is an obvious alternative. This has become a familiar and honoured name, but there is much to be said for retaining the title "theology" for a discipline whose chief purpose is the discussion of the being and nature of God. Philosophical Theology is gaining in favour and there is much to be said for linking the two disciplines in the title of a study that involves the philosophical examination of theological insights. History apart, this might well be the most satisfactory title. It will certainly be used increasingly.

Yet, thanks to Lord Gifford, while the Gifford bequest remains, we shall continue to discuss what natural theology means and in what the study really consists. It has been given a variety of interpretations since Varro first coined the phrase. There can be little objection to the term "theology" for we are talking about God. The means we are using to understand what we can of the mystery are "natural" - as opposed to the supernatural aids vouchsafed to faith. Natural Theology is still an adequate description of the discipline.

<u>Part 3</u>	<u>Chapter 3</u>	<u>Reference Notes</u>
1	<u>G.52</u> ,	p.422
2	<u>G.52</u> ,	p.332
3	<u>G.52</u> ,	p.421
4	<u>G.52</u> ,	p.445
5	<u>Ibid.</u>	
6	<u>G.95</u> ,	p.27
7	<u>G.56</u> ,	pp. 318,320
8	<u>G.100</u> ,	p. 9
9	<u>G.54</u> ,	p.44
10	<u>Dynamics of Faith</u> ,	1957, pp. 33f
11	<u>G.76</u> ,	p.490
12	<u>G.18</u> ,	Vol. 1, p.37
13	<u>G.103</u> ,	Vol. 2, pp.8f
14	<u>G.3</u> ,	p. 5
15	<u>G.3</u> ,	p.66
16	<u>G.3</u> ,	p.65
17	<u>G.54</u> ,	p.138
18	<u>G.54</u> ,	p.137
19	<u>G.95</u> ,	p.520
20	<u>G.41</u> ,	p.36
21	<u>G.41</u> ,	p.37
22	Dom Illyd Trethowan, <u>An Essay in Christian Philosophy</u> ,	1954
23	<u>Ibid.</u>	p.13
24	This is the description of philosophy given by G.F.Stout in <u>G.92</u> ,	pp. 4f

Chapter Four

The Future of Natural Theology

1. The Two Ways to Knowledge of God	page 462
2. What can unaided reason achieve ?	463
3. Unprejudiced Investigation	465
4. Apologetic	467
5. Natural Theology and Metaphysics	471
6. Prognosis	472
Reference Notes	475

1. The Two Ways to Knowledge of God

We began our study with the assumption that there were two clear ways to a knowledge of God, the one offered through revelation for acceptance by faith, the other open to all men and available to unaided reason. The possibility of this second kind of knowledge of God was based on the fact that there were those, or so it seemed, who had reached a knowledge of God independently of the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Some of the pagan thinkers, foremost among them Aristotle, had appeared to reach theistic conclusions by argument, and so it was readily assumed that partial knowledge of God could be reached by reason but full knowledge of God, as far as it is available to man in the present situation, can only come by revelation to faith. This was the position crystallised by Aquinas. But it never seemed right to think of God as one who could be discovered by reason as if he were an undiscovered continent or a mathematical law. Barth has enunciated clearly what others have felt intuitively when he says that God is the subject and never the object. This was the thought that led some of the early Fathers to speak of God's revelation to the Greeks. If the Greeks knew something of God it was not because they were clever but simply that they were able to see what God had revealed to them. St. Paul recognised that any truth about God that the gentiles had grasped was not the result of unaided reason but the consequence of God's revelation.

As we have examined the religious utterances of some of the Greek thinkers it has seemed that we were reading testimonies of faith rather than conclusions of arguments. Our survey of mystical thinkers in an earlier chapter led us to the conclusion that their knowledge of God is based on intuitions and insights rather than on unaided reason. The unsatisfactoriness of the distinction between varying kinds of revelation has emerged again and again in Gifford lectures. All knowledge of God must come by revelation to faith. We have been reminded by several Gifford lecturers that revelation is "personal". Knowledge of God is a matter of God's gracious self-revelation rather than man's eager questing, yet because revelation is personal there will always be the elements of revelation and discovery.

It would be feasible to give the name of natural theology to that knowledge of God that comes from general revelation as opposed to the dogmatic theology that belongs to the Judaeo-Christian tradition, but we would be in danger of falling into the familiar confusion of natural theology with natural religion. This distinction, as we have seen, is too facile.

It has usually been assumed that natural theology is the work of unaided reason. All the evidence has gone to show that unaided reason cannot reach knowledge of God. We now have to ask precisely what unaided reason can achieve.

2. What can unaided reason achieve ?

First it must be admitted that if God is the Creator and if man possesses the imago Dei then to talk of unaided reason

poses problems. If, however, we concede that man has been given freedom by God then there will still be meaning in the word "unaided". At best unaided reason will be able to reach "theoretical" knowledge of God as opposed to the personal knowledge of God which comes by revelation to faith. Natural theology can only talk about religion; in Buber's language, its concerns are always "I-It" and never "I-Thou" relationships.

Natural theology, then, is the attempt to find out all that can be found out about God on the basis of unaided reason. This is what Raymond de Sebonde essayed and this has been the traditional task of natural theology. The natural theologian has attempted to prove the existence of a Prime Mover, a First Cause or the Ens Entium, sometimes from a priori principles, sometimes from empirical data. Even if he had been successful he would not have proved the existence of the God of religion but an abstract principle, for God is always more than can be denoted by the conclusion of an argument. If Hume is right the task of producing such proof is utterly beyond man's ability. Kant, however, allowed that if a man's belief is derived from another source then natural theology can offer support and clarification. None of the Gifford lecturers claim to have proved the existence of God and to this extent they support Hume. Most have supported Kant in one way or another. If it were possible to take a popular vote among the Gifford lecturers, the proposition, that natural theology, using the limited means at its disposal, does indeed give some support to theism, would be carried. There would, of

course, be some abstentions and at least one angry "No!"

The task of natural theology must be carefully circumscribed. The attempt to prove the existence of God will no longer be made, but the natural theologian may set out to demonstrate that a theistic faith is reasonable. If we ask the believer why ^{he} desires such demonstration, his answer will be that he wishes for his own satisfaction to examine the faith by which he lives; he may also wish to commend his faith to others by urging its reasonableness.

3. Unprejudiced Investigation

The natural theologian stands outside faith to ask how far it is possible to demonstrate its reasonableness, which is another way of saying that he examines his faith in the light of reason. The natural theologian is a critic of religion even if a sympathetic critic. Our examination of St. Anselm led to the conclusion that although faith is primary it is still permissible to examine faith in the light of reason; indeed the believer is negligent if he fails to do so. Aquinas in describing his own method spoke of the truth which faith professes and reason investigates.¹

Among the occupants of Gifford chairs, lecturer after lecturer has borne witness to this task. C.P.Tiele said that the purpose of natural theology was "to subject religion to unprejudiced investigation."² G.G.Stokes wrote :

" Progress may be made in natural theology in either of two ways : by deducing consequences from what we know or

observe, or by assuming for trial the truth of a statement made on whatever authority it may be, and then examining whether the supposition of its truth so falls in with such knowledge as we possess. . . as to lead us to the conviction that the statement does indeed express the truth."³

This latter method implies the possibility of examining revealed truths by the method of hypothesis. In similar vein, A.M.

Fairbairn wrote :

" The only condition on which reason could have nothing to do with religion, is that religion should have nothing to do with truth."⁴

If revelation is a valid way of knowing truth nothing need be feared from reason which represents the only way open to us of testing truth. So Edward Caird could say :

" It seems as if religious faith must seek reason, as a condition of its own life; and yet that, in seeking reason, it seeks its own destruction. It must seek reason: for it is impossible that any real faith can live without attempting to understand itself or to develop its own intellectual content . . . If it appeals to reason, to reason it must go."⁵

We recall the title given by Henry Jones to his essay in natural theology, The Faith that Enquires. Natural theology is honest enquiry into faith.

More recently John Laird concluded that while natural theology might not prove much it could clarify much in theology. We recall Leonard Hodgson's conclusion that it is not inconsistent to hold that the findings of revealed religion should be submitted to the judgement of human reason.⁶ Writing of natural theology,

C.A.Campbell said :

"Its main business, as I understand it, is to consider how much of certain or probable knowledge is obtainable, on grounds which approve themselves to reason, concerning the existence of God; and, in the event of an affirmative answer to the question of God's existence, concerning His nature, and His relationship to the human soul.

Formulated in more rough and ready, but not, I think, fundamentally misleading fashion, Natural Theology seeks a rational answer to the question 'Is religion true?' And if so, in what precise sense?"⁷

Here again we notice that religion provides the data which is to be tested and sifted by natural theology. Natural theology is the unprejudiced examination of what claims to be religious truth; it is at the same time critic and ally of faith; it is the believer's self-criticism.

We have noted that the unbelievers also may criticise. From Xenophanes to Hume and to our own day there have been critics outside the realm of faith who have made their own particular contribution to natural theology.

4. Apologetic

The second driving force for natural theology is the need to provide apologetic. We have seen that there is no swift way with unbelievers. As William Temple said, the number of people converted by the arguments of natural theology must be extremely small. Raymond de Sebonde's claim to give people the answers in less than a month smacks of slick modern salesmanship. Yet there is need for a modern theologia naturalis as Emil Brunner

pointed out :

" Though proof is excluded, this does not exclude the possibility of a discussion pointing towards such evidence of the existence of God as we have. The decisive factor will always be the simple proclamation of the Christian message. But there is such a thing as theological work done upon the message, i.e. intellectual work in the realm of concepts, which can and is intended to serve the proclamation of the message. Similarly there is such a thing as an intellectual and conceptual work of preparation, which clears obstacles out of the way of proclamation."⁸

We saw in C.S.Lewis's account of his own spiritual pilgrimage how the poets and philosophers prepared the way for his acceptance of faith. There is need for such preparatory apologetic. This kind of apologetic has been provided again and again by Gifford lecturers. Indeed lecturers have sometimes been criticised because this apologetic element has appeared to loom large. Lord Gifford undoubtedly hoped that the apologetic element would appear in the lectures. His will makes it quite clear :

" My desire and hope is that these lectureships and lectures may promote and advance among all classes of the community the true knowledge of Him Who is, and there is none and nothing beside Him, in Whom we live and move and have our being, and in Whom all things consist, and of man's real relationship to Him Whom truly to know is life everlasting."

We could hardly wish for clearer support for the view we have already expressed. Lord Gifford himself had a deep personal faith in God. He desired that this faith should be investigated impartially. He deliberately allowed for the possibility of

freethinkers and unbelievers sharing in the investigation. Nevertheless he trusted that in general the lectures would serve an apologetic end.

There is no defence for the apologist who deliberately distorts the evidence in order to convince the unbeliever. There will always remain, however, the possibility that a philosopher's conclusions will be unconsciously motivated by wishful thinking. A High Court Judge, even without the benefit of Freud's findings, must have recognised this possibility and in asking that natural theology should be treated like chemistry or astronomy Lord Gifford was trying to secure such impartiality as is possible. He was wrong if he thought that the evidence produced would be irrefragably convincing. He would be more in line with the view expressed by Brunner if he had seen the task of the natural theologian as that of cross-examining the witnesses and presenting the evidence as lucidly as possible. In a court of law the evidence is often inconclusive but some kind of verdict must be given. Faith however is not a purely human judgement on evidence presented, but the presentation of the evidence, as Brunner suggests, may clear obstacles out of the way of faith-acceptance. Lord Gifford does not quite express it in this way but in the light of changing convictions concerning possibilities of proof and demonstration it is a legitimate interpretation of his intention.

Natural theology provides a common meeting ground for belief and unbelief. This has been recognised more readily by

the Roman Catholic Church than by protestantism. Neither catholic nor protestant would be prepared to claim that natural theology can take a man all the way to faith. At the end a leap of faith-commitment is necessary. We recall Douglas Hyde's description of one stage of his pilgrimage :

" St. Thomas Aquinas's five proofs of God seemed to me unanswerable, but . . . I was obliged to admit that whilst they carried with them intellectual conviction they had not made God come alive for me . . . I could accept his existence intellectually but that was all."⁹

All that the five ways could do for him was to show him the necessity of a Prime Mover, a First Cause or Necessary Being; they could not give him religion. Nevertheless such arguments put him in a position where he could accept faith with intellectual integrity.

Natural theology was described by H.H.Farmer as

" the attempt to present theism as a reasonable and satisfying (indeed, the most reasonable and satisfying), though not logically demonstrable, world-view."¹⁰

Even when this "reasonable world-view" has been expounded the leap of faith is still necessary. The natural theologian of today recognises his limitations, but such recognition is not new. The first of the now despised Bridgewater Treatises ended on this note :

" Natural theology . . . however little to be trusted as an informer, yet as an enquirer, or rather as a prompter to enquiry, is of inestimable service. It is a high function that she discharges, for though not able to satisfy the search, she impels to the search."¹¹

Thomas Chalmers thus recognised the limited apologetic service rendered by natural theology. This tallies with the conclusion reached by so many of the Gifford lecturers, but there has been decreasing confidence in the power of natural theology as apologetic. One could almost plot a graph showing the decline of the fortunes of natural theology in this respect, beginning with the high hopes of the Hegelians and descending to the point where natural theology is limited to providing a neutral ground for discussion between the believer and unbeliever. Nevertheless if a leap of faith is necessary natural theology can ensure that the leap is not made entirely in the dark. Apologetic is not the primary function of natural theology, and there will always be the inherent danger that the impartiality of enquiry will be sacrificed to the attempt to persuade. Yet for the rational man natural theology may be a prolegomenon to faith, for faith appeals to reason in a way that credulity does not.

5. Natural Theology and Metaphysics

It has become clear that there can be no simple identification of natural theology and metaphysics. Metaphysical speculation such as that of Whitehead, Alexander or Bergson is best described as metaphysics. It is only natural theology in the broadest sense. Metaphysical constructions based on Christian insights, as we have suggested, may fittingly be described as Christian Philosophy. A metaphysical scheme, into which revealed truth can be integrated, might conceivably be described as natural theology on the grounds that it serves

to demonstrate the reasonableness of faith. There will always be an area of overlap between metaphysics, Christian Philosophy and natural theology. Lord Gifford was wise in being so meticulously comprehensive in his interpretation of natural theology for the purpose of the lectureships. Our study of metaphysics led us to the conclusion that we don't go far in any kind of metaphysics before we enter the realm of faith or we make faith statements under the guise of metaphysics. We shall be wise not to make too close an identification between natural theology and metaphysics.

6. Prognosis

In spite of any difficulties created by the actual wording of Lord Gifford's will there has been an extremely wide survey of the problems involved in natural theology. Religion has been discussed by the anthropologist, the psychologist, the sociologist and the historian. The scientists have examined the world order to find what evidence there is of deity. The moral philosophers have investigated man's moral experience with a view to finding whether God is indeed a necessary postulate. Philosophers have examined metaphysical systems and constructed more in the attempt to solve the problems of theism. Other philosophers have examined and re-examined the traditional arguments for the existence of God, while the theologians, with notable exceptions, have been prepared to put faith to the test of rational enquiry.

With the exception of a few who have carefully avoided the ultimate issue the lecturers have attempted, in one way or

another, to answer the fundamental questions :

How far can unaided reason verify the assertions of faith?

and,

What kind of knowledge of God can unaided reason reach ?

The answers have been varied, Barth disallowing any possibility of help from reason, others like Brunner and Tillich allowing a minimal contribution, others again assigning a greater importance to the impartial investigation made by reason. There is sufficient unanimity for us to assert that there is such a study as natural theology, perhaps only a shadow of that study envisaged by Raymond de Sebonde and less influential than Lord Gifford desired, but yet an indispensable discipline. Because of the wording of the will appointments to the Gifford lectureships need not be limited to those who will undertake the study of natural theology in the limited form that we have outlined. Natural theology, in order to do its own work, needs to examine the findings of the scientist, the psychologist, the sociologist and the historian. He must listen to the theologian and the philosopher. Even listening to natural theology's avowed opponent has clarified certain issues for the natural theologian. The Gifford endowment makes it possible to continue calling in such specialists as these who, while they may or may not call themselves natural theologians, serve the cause of natural theology by bringing the light of reason to bear upon the issues of religion.

We may summarise the reports of the specialists called in to attend this sick man of Europe by saying that there is still a reasonable expectation of life. The patient must not attempt as much as he did in his younger days. Indeed, if he contents himself with the less ambitious but nevertheless arduous task we have outlined, he can look forward to an interminable old age. The changing climate of the theological world is also auspicious for him. There is today a readiness to re-examine long established theological positions. Church leaders themselves have given publicity to the doubts and difficulties of the ordinary man. In a theological setting where it is almost a virtue to doubt natural theology can only flourish. While there are those who want to think about their religion and not just to accept it blindly there will be a place for the natural theologian, the man who is prepared to examine by the impartial light of unaided reason the claims of religion whether they be based on so-called miraculous revelation or the light that enlightens every man.

Part 3Chapter 4Reference Notes

- 1 Aquinas, Summa Contra Gentiles, Book 1, Ch.9
- 2 G.97, Vol. 1, p.8
- 3 G.91, Vol. 1, p.3
- 4 G.32, p.18
- 5 G.21, Vol.1, p.14
- 6 Supra p.230 G.49, Vol. 1, p.22
- 7 G.23, p. 5
- 8 Brunner and Barth, Natural Theology, 1946, p. 58
- 9 Douglas Hyde, I believed, 1950, p.220
- 10 G.33, p. 8
- 11 Thomas Chalmers, On the Power, Wisdom and Goodness of God,&c
1832, Vol.2. p. 289.

APPENDIX ONE

The Text of Lord Gifford's Will

DEEDS OF NEW FOUNDATION, ETC. *

GIFFORD LECTURESHIP ON NATURAL THEOLOGY

EXTRACTS from the Trust-Disposition and Settlement of the late
ADAM GIFFORD, sometime one of the Senators of the College of
Justice, Scotland, dated 21st August 1885.

I, ADAM GIFFORD, sometime one of the Senators of the College of Justice, Scotland, now residing at Granton House, near Edinburgh, being desirous to revise, consolidate, alter and amend my trust-settlements and testamentary writings, and having fully and maturely considered my means and estate, and the circumstances in which I am placed, and the just claims and expectations of my son and relatives, and the modes in which my surplus funds may be most usefully and beneficially expended, and considering myself bound to apply part of my means in advancing the public welfare and the cause of truth, do hereby make my Trust-deed and latter Will and Testament - that is to say, I give my body to the earth as it was before, in order that the enduring blocks and materials thereof may be employed in new combinations; and I give my soul to God, in Whome and with Whom it always was, to be in Him and with Him for ever in closer and more conscious union; and with regard to my earthly means and estate, I do hereby give, grant, dispo, convey, and make over and leave and bequeath All and Whole my whole means and estate, heritable and moveable, real and personal, of every description, now belonging to, or that shall belong to me at the time of my death, with all writs and vouchers thereof, to and in favour of Herbert James Gifford, my son; John Gifford, Esquire, my brother; Walter Alexander Raleigh, my nephew, presently residing in London; Adam West Gifford, W.S., my nephew; Andrew Scott, C.A., in Edinburgh, husband of my niece; and Thomas Raleigh, Esquire, barrister-at-law, London, and the survivors and survivor of them accepting, and the heirs of the last survivor, and to such other person

* as printed in the Edinburgh University Calendar, 1888-89

or persons as I may name, or as may be assumed or appointed by competent authority, a majority being always a quorum, as trustees for the ends, uses and purposes after-mentioned, but in trust only for the purposes following : (Here follow the first ten purposes.) And I declare the preceding ten purposes of this trust to be preferable, and I direct that these ten purposes be fulfilled in the first place before any others, and before any residue of my estate, or any part thereof, is disposed of, and before any residue is ascertained or struck, declaring that it is only what may remain of my means and estate after the said ten purposes are fulfilled that I call herein the "residue" of my estate, and out of which I direct the lectureships aftermentioned to be founded and endowed. And in regard that, in so far as I can at present see or anticipate, there will be a large "residue" of my means and estate in the sense in which I have above explained the word, being that which remains after fulfilling the above ten purposes, and being of opinion that I am bound if there is a "residue" as so explained, to employ it, or part of it, for the good of my fellow-men, and having considered how I may best do so, I direct the "residue" to be disposed of as follows : - I having been for many years deeply and firmly convinced that the true knowledge of God, that is, of the Being, Nature, and Attributes of the Infinite, of the All, of the First and the Only Cause, that is, the One and Only Substance and Being, and the true and felt knowledge (not mere nominal knowledge) of the relations of man and of the universe to Him, and of the true foundations of all ethics and morals, being, I say, convinced that this knowledge, when really felt and acted on, is the means of man's highest well-being, and the security of his upward progress, I have resolved from the "residue" of my estate as aforesaid, to institute and found, in connection, if possible, with the Scottish Universities, lectureships or classes for the promotion of the study of the said subjects, and for the teaching and diffusion of sound views

regarding them, among the whole population of Scotland, Therefore, I direct and appoint my said trustees from the "residue" of my said estate, after fulfilling the said ten preferable purposes, to pay the following sums, or to assign and make over property of that value to the following bodies in trust : - First, To the Senatus Academicus of the University of Edinburgh, and failing them, by declinature or otherwise, to the Dean and Faculty of Advocates of the College of Justice of Scotland, the sum of £25,000. Second, To the Senatus Academicus of the University of Glasgow, and failing them, by declinature or otherwise, to the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, the sum of £20,000. Third, To the Senatus Academicus of the University of Aberdeen, whom failing, by declinature or otherwise, to the Faculty of Advocates of Aberdeen, the sum of £20,000. And Fourth, To the Senatus Academicus of the University of St Andrews, whom failing, by declinature or otherwise, to the Physicians and Surgeons of St Andrews, and of the district twelve miles round it, the sum of £15,000 sterling, amounting the said four sums in all to the sum of £80,000 sterling; but said bequests are made, and said sums are to be paid in trust only for the following purpose, that is to say, for the purpose of establishing in each of the four cities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, and St Andrews, a Lectureship or Regular Chair for "Promoting, Advancing, Teaching, and Diffusing the Study of Natural Theology," in the widest sense of that term, in other words, " The Knowledge of God, the Infinite, the All, the First and Only Cause, the One and the Sole Substance, the Sole Being, the Sole Reality, and the Sole Existence, the Knowledge of His Nature and Attributes, the Knowledge of the Relations which men and the whole universe bear to Him, the Knowledge of the Nature and Foundation of Ethics or Morals, and of all Obligations and Duties thence arising." The Senatus Academicus in each of the four Universities, or the

bodies substituted to them respectively, shall be the patrons of the several lectureships, and the administrators of the said respective endowments, and of the affairs of each lectureship in each city. I call them for shortness simply the "patrons". Now I leave all the details and arrangements of each lectureship in the hands and in the discretion of the "patrons" respectively, who shall have full power from time to time to adjust and regulate the same in conformity as closely as possible to the following brief principles and directions which shall be binding on each and all of the "patrons" as far as practicable and possible. I only indicate leading principles. First, The endowment or capital fund of each lectureship shall be preserved entire, and be invested securely upon or in the purchase of lands or heritages which are likely to continue of the same value, or increase in value, or in such other way as Statute may permit; merely the annual proceeds or interest shall be expended in maintaining the respective lectureships. Second, The "patrons" may delay the institution of the lectureships, and may from time to time intermit the appointment of lecturers and the delivery of lectures for one or more years for the purpose of accumulating the income or enlarging the capital. Third, The lecturers shall be appointed from time to time, each for a period of only two years and no longer, but the same lecturer may be re-appointed for other two periods of two years each, provided that no one person shall hold the office of lecturer in the same city for more than six years in all, it being desirable that the subject be promoted and illustrated by different minds. Fourth, The lecturers appointed shall be subjected to no test of any kind, and shall not be required to take an oath, or to emit or subscribe any declaration of belief, or to make any promise of any kind; they may be of any denomination whatever, or of no denomination at all (and many earnest and high-minded men prefer to belong to no ecclesiastical denomination); they may be of any religion or

way of thinking, or, as is sometimes said, they may be of no religion, or they may be so-called sceptics or agnostics or freethinkers, provided only that the "patrons" will use diligence to secure that they be able reverent men, true thinkers, sincere lovers of and earnest inquirers after truth.

Fifth, I wish the lecturers to treat their subject as a strictly natural science, the greatest of all possible sciences, indeed, in one sense, the only science, that of Infinite Being, without reference to or reliance upon any supposed special exceptional or so-called miraculous revelation. I wish it considered just as astronomy or chemistry is. I have intentionally indicated, in describing the subject of the lectures, the general aspect which personally I would expect the lectures to bear, but the lecturers shall be under no restraint whatever in their treatment of their theme; for example, they may freely discuss (and it may be well to do so) all questions about man's conceptions of God or the Infinite, their origin, nature, and truth, whether he can have any such conceptions, whether God is under any or what limitations, and so on, as I am persuaded that nothing but good can result from free discussion.

Sixth, The lectures shall be public and popular, that is, open not only to students of the Universities, but to the whole community without matriculation, as I think that the subject should be studied and known by all, whether receiving University instruction or not. I think such knowledge, if real, lies at the root of all well being. I suggest that the fee should be as small as is consistent with the due management of the lectureships, and the due appreciation of the lectures. Besides a general and popular audience, I advise that the lecturers also have a special class of students conducted in the usual way, and instructed by examination and thesis, written and oral.

Seventh, As to the number of the lectures, much must be left to the discretion of the lecturer, I should think the subject cannot be treated even

in abstract in less than twenty lectures, and they may be many times that number. Eighth, The "patrons" if and when they see fit may make grants from the free income of the endowments for or towards the publication in a cheap form of any of the lectures, or any part thereof, or abstracts thereof, which they may think likely to be useful. Ninth, The "patrons" respectively shall all annually submit their accounts to some one chartered accountant in Edinburgh, to be named from time to time by the Lord Ordinary on the Bills, whom failing, to the Accountant of the Court of Session, who shall prepare and certify a short abstract of the accounts and investments, to be recorded in the Books of Council and Session, or elsewhere, for preservation. And my desire and hope is that these lectureships and lectures may promote and advance among all classes of the community the true knowledge of Him Who is, and there is none and nothing beside Him, in Whom we live and move and have our being, and in Whom all things consist, and of man's real relationship to Him Whom truly to know is life everlasting. If the residue of my estate, in the sense before defined, should turn out insufficient to pay the whole sums above provided for the four lectureships (of which shortcoming, however, I trust there is no danger), then each lectureship shall suffer a proportional diminution; and if, on the other hand, there is any surplus over and above the said sum of £80,000 sterling, it shall belong one-half to my son, the said Herbert James Gifford, in life-rent, and to his issue other than the heirs of entail in fee, whom failing, to my unmarried nieces equally in fee; and the other half shall belong equally among my unmarried nieces. And I revoke all settlements and codicils previous to the date hereof if this receives effect, providing that any payments made to legatees during my life shall be accounted as part payment of their provisions. And I consent to registration hereof for preservation, and I dispense with delivery hereof. - In witness whereof, &c.

APPENDIX TWO

Lists of Gifford Lecturers

at the four Universities

The dates are those given in the respective University Calendars. In numerous cases the lectures were not given in the year of appointment.

1888	Friedrich Max Muller
1892	John Caird
1893	William Wallace
1895	John Caird *
1896	Alexander Balmain Bruce
1900	Edward Caird
1903	Emile Boutroux
1906	Andrew Cecil Bradley
1910	John Watson
1913	Arthur James Balfour
1916	Samuel Alexander
1921	Henry Jones
1923	William Paterson Paterson
1926	John Scott Haldane
1928	John Alexander Smith
1930	William Temple
1934	William MacNeile Dixon
1937	William Ernest Hocking
1939	John Laird
1947	Ralph Barton Perry
1949	Herbert Henry Farmer
1952	John Macmurray
1956	Leonard Hodgson
1959	Carl Friedrich von Weizsacker
1961	Charles William Hendel
1965	Herbert Butterfield

* John Caird's second series was delayed due to his illness.

1888	James Hutchison Stirling
1890	George Gabriel Stokes
1892	Otto Pfleiderer
1894	Alexander Campbell Fraser
1896	Cornelis Petrus Tiele
1899	William James
1903	Henry Melvill Gwatkin
1905	Simon Somerville Laurie
1907	Robert Flint *
1909	William Warde Fowler
1911	Bernard Bosanquet
1913	Henri Bergson
1915	William Mitchell Ramsay
1918	George Frederick Stout
1921	Andrew Seth Pringle-Pattison
1924	James George Frazer
1926	Arthur Stanley Eddington
1927	Alfred North Whitehead
1928	John Dewey
1930	Nathan Soderblom
1932	Edwyn Robert Bevan
1934	Albert Schweitzer
1935	Charles Sherrington
1937	Reinhold Niebuhr
1940	Oscar Kraus
1945	Christopher Dawson
1949	Niels Bohr
1950	Charles Earle Raven
1952	Arnold Joseph Toynbee
1954	Rudolf Karl Bultmann
1956	Austin Marsden Farrer

* Robert Flint did not lecture owing to illness

Gifford Lecturers at Edinburgh (continued)

1957-58 Wolfgang Kohler
1959-60 Roderick Diarmid McLennan
1961-62 John Baillie *
1962-63 David Daube
1964-65 Donald MacKenzie MacKinnon

* John Baillie died in 1960 but the written lectures were accorded the status of Gifford lectures.

Note : Friedrich von Hugel accepted an invitation to occupy the Gifford Chair for sessions 1924-5 and 1925-6, but was compelled to withdraw on the grounds of ill-health.

Gifford Lecturers at Aberdeen

1889-91	Edward Burnett Tylor
1891-93	Andrew Martin Fairbairn
1896-98	James Ward
1899-00	Josiah Royce
1900-02	Archibald Henry Sayce
1904-06	James Adam
1907-08	Hans Driesch
1909-11	William Ridgeway
1912-13	Andrew Seth Pringle-Pattison
1914-15	William Ritchie Sorley
1918-19	Clement Charles Julian Webb
1921-22	Ernest William Hobson
1924-26	William Mitchell
1927-29	Ernest William Barnes .
1931-32	Etienne Gilson
1935-36	William David Ross
1937-38	Karl Barth
1938-40	Arthur Darby Nock
1940-42	Jacques Maritain *
1949-50	Gabriel Marcel
1948-50	John Wisdom
1951-52	Michael Polanyi
1953-54	Paul Tillich
1956-57	Herbert Arthur Hodges
1959-61	Henry Habberley Price
1963-65	Alister Hardy
1964-66	Raymond Aron †
1966-68	Malcolm Knox †

* Jacques Maritain did not lecture owing to war conditions.

† Lectures not yet delivered

Gifford Lecturers at St. Andrews

1888-90 Andrew Lang
1890-92 Edward Caird
1894-96 Lewis Campbell
1899-01 Rodolfo Lanciani
1902-04 Richard Burdon Haldane
1907-10 James Ward
1911-13 James George Frazer
1915-16 John Arthur Thomson
1917-18 William Ralph Inge
1919-20 Lewis Richard Farnell
1922-24 Conwy Lloyd Morgan
1924-25 Lewis Richard Farnell
1926-28 Alfred Edward Taylor
1929-30 Charles Gore
1931-32 Robert Ranulph Marett
1935-36 Herbert Hensley Henson
1936-37 Werner Jaeger
1937-38 William George De Burgh
1938-39 Joseph Bidez
1939-40 Richard Kroner
1947-48 Emil Brunner
1948-49 Alexander Macbeath
1949-50 Herbert James Paton
1951-53 Brand Blanshard
1953-55 Charles Arthur Campbell
1955-56 Werner Heisenberg
1956-58 Vigo Auguste Demant
1958-60 Georg Henrik von Wright
1960-62 Steven Runciman
1962-64 Henry Chadwick
1964-66 John Niemeyer Findlay

APPENDIX THREE

An alphabetical list of Gifford lecturers,
an annotated bibliography of published lectures
and subjects of unpublished lectures

ADAM, James (1860-1907)

Aberdeen, 1904-06

The Religious Teachers of Greece, Edinburgh, 1908

James Adam traces two streams of religious thought, the poetic beginning with Homer and culminating in Sophocles and the philosophical culminating in Anaxagoras. There is a confluence in Euripides, 'the philosopher upon the stage'; the closing lectures are devoted to Platonic philosophy. The volume was published posthumously and contains a memoir.

ALEXANDER, Samuel (1859-1938)

Glasgow, 1916-18

Space Time and Deity, 1920, two volumes

A metaphysical essay based on the view that Space-Time is the stuff of which matter and all things are specifications. The world does not exist in Space and Time, but in Space-Time. God is the universe in so far as it is striving towards deity.

ARON, Raymond See page 527

BAILLIE, John (1886-1960)

Edinburgh, 1961-62

The Sense of the Presence of God, 1962

These lectures which were never delivered were prepared by John Baillie before his death and were accorded the status of Gifford lectures by the trustees. The years recorded above indicate when the lectures were due to be delivered.

John Baillie discusses the validity of religious knowledge in the light of contemporary movements in philosophy and theology. Faith for Baillie is the cognitive element in religious experience and is a mode of primary apprehension. The sense of the presence of God

involves this perceptual element and is to a degree verifiable.

BALFOUR, Arthur James (1848-1930)

Glasgow, 1914 and 1922-23

Theism and Humanism , 1915

Theism and Thought , 1923

Lord Balfour sets out to give a "plain man's" philosophy, taking into account the data presented to the ordinary man. Naturalism cannot give a satisfactory explanation of beauty, goodness and truth as values in the universe. The answer lies in theism - a belief in the God of religion rather than the God of metaphysics. In the second series of lectures, separated from the first by the world war, Balfour applies methodological doubt to theistic concepts and concludes again that theism is necessary if the values of life are to be meaningful.

BARNES, Ernest William (1874-1953)

Aberdeen, 1927-29

Scientific Theory and Religion, Cambridge, 1933

Bishop Barnes's lectures contain detailed discussion of space-time, relativity, theories of matter and the origin of life, the evolution of plant and animal life and the place of our world within the universe. None of this scientific data contradicts the Christian concept of God. Science may indeed provide supporting evidence for faith, but the religious man's final authority lies in spiritual insight.

BARTH, Karl (1886-)

Aberdeen, 1937-38

The Knowledge of God and the Service of God, 1938

Barth describes himself as "an avowed opponent of all natural theology", and in expounding the Confessio Scotica of 1560 proposes to serve natural theology by demonstrating the strength of the antagonist. There is no place for a human approach to God. The whole attempt to form a natural theology is a sign of man's over-weening pride. Man must accept God's approach through the Word. Any other approach is idolatry.

BERGSON, Henri (1859-1941)

Edinburgh, 1913-14

Bergson lectured on The Problem of Personality. The outbreak of war prevented the delivery of the second series and no lectures have been published.

BEVAN, Edwyn Robert (1870-1943)

Edinburgh, 1933-34

Symbolism and Belief, 1938

Holy Images, 1940

Holy Images contains the first four lectures of the series, which take the form of an inquiry into idolatry and image-worship in ancient paganism and Christianity. Symbolism and Belief raises the question of the value of symbols as an aid to conceptual thought. Symbolism is compared and contrasted with the principle of analogy. All ideas of God are finally symbolical and reason's function is to criticise and correct the symbolism.

BIDEZ, Joseph (1867-1945)

St. Andrews, 1938-39

Eos ou Platon et l'Orient, Bruxelles, 1945

Professor Bidez of l'Academie Royale de Belgique traced the influence of middle-eastern concepts and myths upon Platonic thought as evidenced in the Dialogues and the Republic. This work has not been translated into English.

BLANSHARD, Brand (1892-)

St. Andrews, 1951-53

Reason and Goodness, 1961

The tension between reason and feeling in moral philosophy is the main theme of the earlier lectures, the Stoics and St. Francis being taken as exemplars. The views of recent moral philosophers (Moore, Ross, Ewing, Dewey and Perry) are discussed. A final appeal is made for the rational temper in ethical thought. Reason and Belief, containing the second series of lectures is not yet published.

BOHR, Niels Henrik David (1885-1962)

Edinburgh, 1949

Niels Bohr, the distinguished nuclear scientist, lectured on Causality and Complementarity : Epistemological Lessons of Studies in Atomic Physics. The lectures have not been published.

BOSANQUET, Bernard (1848-1923)

Edinburgh, 1911-12

The Principle of Individuality and Value, 1912

The Value and Destiny of the Individual, 1913

Bosanquet's thought is greatly influenced by Hegel and Bradley. Individuality or self-completeness gives the clue to reality. Individuality finds itself and loses itself in the Absolute. This world is "a vale of soul-making" and in the second series Bosanquet traces the adventures of the self as it faces the hazards and hardships of the finite world in its quest for stability and security, which is finally discovered through the religious consciousness.

BOUTROUX, Emile (1845-1921)

Glasgow, 1903-05

Science and Religion in Contemporary Philosophy, 1909

translated by J. Nield

B M. Moutroux lectured in French on La Nature et l'Esprit, and though the above volume is not acknowledged as being based on the Gifford Lectures it seems that much of the material is embodied in it. In Part I the author deals with the naturalistic approach of Comte, Spencer and others; Part II is concerned with the thought of Ritschl, the limitations of science, and the authority of religious experience.

BRADLEY, Andrew Cecil (1851-1935)

Glasgow, 1907-08

Ideals of Religion, 1940

A.C. Bradley occupied the Chair of Poetry at Oxford and the Chair of English Literature at Glasgow. He

brought the insights gained from his own field to his thinking about religion. A man can study poetry without feeling it and a man can study religion in the same way, but he must feel it to be able to assess its truth. Man is described by Bradley as "finite infinite"; as he loses himself in God he finds his real being. Bradley's thought reflects the idealism of his brother, F.H. Bradley, and is very much in line with Bosanquet's thought. The volume was published posthumously over thirty years after the lectures were delivered.

BRUCE, Alexander Balmain (1851-1899)

Glasgow, 1897-98

The Providential Order of the World, 1897

The Moral Order of the World, 1899

A.B. Bruce, essentially a Biblical scholar rather than a philosopher, accepted evolutionary theories as explaining man's development, but nevertheless found evidence for the existence of God in man's spiritual and moral progress. In the second series of lectures Bruce dealt with the idea of providence in Buddhism and Zoroastrianism, in Greek, Hebrew and Christian thought and in some contemporary writings.

BRUNNER, Emil (1889-)

St. Andrews, 1947

Christianity and Civilisation, 1948 and 1949, two volumes

In these lectures we have an avowedly Christian answer to certain questions facing western civilisation. The problems of being, truth, time, justice, freedom and creativity are discussed. In the second series specific problems of technics, science, art, wealth and education are approached from the viewpoint of Brunner's Biblical theology.

BULTMANN, Rudolf Karl (1884-)

Edinburgh, 1954-55

History and Eschatology, Edinburgh, 1958

Bultmann offers in these lectures a clear statement of his attitude to history. The Christian believer is taken out of the world of time and is confronted by the ever present Lord who transcends history. Bultmann has been influenced in his thinking about the meaning of history by R.G.Collingwood in whose thought he finds considerable affinity. This is particularly evident in this volume.

BUTTERFIELD, Herbert See page 527

CAIRD, Edward (1835-1908)

(1) St. Andrews, 1890-92

The Evolution of Religion, Glasgow, 1894, two volumes

In the first course (volume 1) Caird investigates the possibility of a science of religion with special reference to Max Muller and Herbert Spencer, and traces the evolution of religion in Greek and Jewish history in the pre-Christian era. The second course is concerned with the evolution of Christianity in the early centuries with two concluding lectures on the pre-Reformation and post-Reformation periods.

(2) Glasgow, 1900-02

The Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers, Glasgow, 1904, two volumes.

The first volume is concerned mainly with Platonic and Aristotelian "theology" with introductory lectures on the nature of theology and its relationship to religion. Caird concludes his treatment of Aristotle in the second volume and traces the contribution to theological discussion of the Stoics, Philo and Plotinus, summing up the influence of Greek thought upon Christian theology in a final lecture.

CAIRD, John (1820-1898)

Glasgow, 1892-93 and 1895-96

The Fundamental Ideas of Christianity, Glasgow, 1899,

two volumes.

The lectures were published posthumously with a memoir on John Caird written by his brother Edward. Lectures on the relationship of faith and reason and natural and revealed religion are followed by discussion of the Christian concept of God (compared with pantheism and deism), the origin and nature of evil, the Incarnation, Atonement and the Future Life. The truths of Christianity are seen as the fulfilment of the truths of natural theology.

CAMPBELL, Charles Arthur (1897-)

St. Andrews, 1953-55

On Selfhood and Godhood, 1957

The first course was devoted to selfhood, freedom and moral experience with preliminary lectures on the function of reason in relation to religion. Professor Campbell argues that it is still reasonable to talk about the human "soul". The second course dealt with problems involved in theism - sin and suffering, religious experience and the objective validity of religion. Religious experience which can only be interpreted symbolically provides prima facie evidence to be tested by reason. Philosophy may support theistic beliefs but cannot take us beyond the bounds of probability.

CAMPBELL, Lewis (1830-1908)

St. Andrews, 1894-96

Religion in Greek Literature, 1898

This volume provides a straightforward account by a classical scholar of the development of religion in Greek culture, beginning with the religion of the Iliad and the Odyssey. The changing pattern of Greek religion is traced through the hero cults and mystery religions to the times of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.

CHADWICK, Henry (1920-)

St. Andrews, 1962-64

Henry Chadwick lectured on Authority in the Early Church with particular reference to the authority of scripture, tradition and reason in the writings of some of the early fathers. The lectures are not yet published.

DAUBE, David (1909-)

Edinburgh, 1962-63

David Daube took as the subject of his first course The Deed and the Doer in the Bible. The lectures are not yet published.

DAWSON, Christopher (1889-)

Edinburgh, 1947-49

Religion and Culture, 1948

Religion and the Rise of Western Culture, 1950

Christopher Dawson describes religion as the dynamic element in culture. He traces the impact of religion upon world cultures, narrowing the field in the second volume to the western world, showing the influence of Christianity upon the barbarian world of the early centuries and its contribution to the pattern of mediaeval society

DE BURGH, William George (1866-1943)

St. Andrews, 1937-38

From Morality to Religion, 1938

De Burgh shows how moral experience presents a problem which philosophy is unable to solve but to which religion offers a solution. The mutual relationships of religion and morality are fully discussed and the moral argument for theism treated at length.

DEMANT, Vigo Auguste (1893-)

St. Andrews, 1956-58

Canon Demant lectured on The Penumbra of Ethics, the title of the first series being The Religious Climate and the second The Moral Career of Christendom. The lectures are not yet published.

DEWEY, John (1859-1952)

Edinburgh, 1928-29

The Quest for Certainty, 1930

This is an essay in pragmatic philosophy. The world needs not so much more scientific knowledge as greater ability to discern values. The task of philosophy is to interpret the conclusions of science with reference to beliefs about purpose and values. The quest for certainty finds its fulfilment not in speculative knowledge but action.

DIXON, William MacNeile (1866-1946)

Glasgow, 1935-37

The Human Situation, 1937

This is confessedly an attempt to meet the condition that the lectures should be popular in the sense that they should be intelligible to the average man. The problems of science, religion and morality, and most of the usual subjects in the Gifford curriculum are dealt with and the argument is frequently illustrated by apt quotation from the world of literature. W.M. Dixon, formerly Professor of English Literature at Glasgow was invited to take the place of Emile Meyerson who had died before he could fulfil his duties as Gifford lecturer.

DRIESCH, Hans (1867-1941)

Aberdeen, 1907-08

Science and Philosophy of Organism, 1908 two volumes

The first volume is a biological study, surveying some of the nineteenth century theories of evolution. This survey is concluded in the second volume, in which Hans Driesch also propounds his own particular philosophy of organism - vitalism. This philosophical view may be held alongside a religious faith but the work is one of speculative philosophy rather than natural theology.

EDDINGTON, Arthur Stanley (1882-1944)

Edinburgh, 1927

The nature of the Physical World, Cambridge, 1928

Eddington, the first representative of Astronomy

among the Gifford lecturers, examines the concepts of Time, Relativity and Gravitation, and expounds the Quantum Theory. Scientific analysis of the universe is necessary but it deals in pointer readings rather than ultimate truth. The man who uses the scientist's picture for purposes outside science does so at his own risk. The scientist makes an inventory while the mystic seeks for meaning only part of which he finds in the inventory.

FAIRBAIRN, Andrew Martin (1838-1912)

Aberdeen, 1891-93

The Philosophy of the Christian Religion, 1902

It is thought that much of the material used in the lectures is embodied in this work, but it is not acknowledged in any way. Fairbairn makes a comprehensive survey of the philosophical problems involved in Christian theology.

FARMER, Herbert Henry (1892-)

Glasgow, 1949-50

Revelation and Religion, 1954

Farmer interprets natural theology as "the attempt to present theism as a reasonable and satisfying, though not logically demonstrative, world view", and proceeds to make out a case for theism based on Christian insight. The Christian revelation is not just another illustration of the general class of religions but provides the normative concept of religion itself.

FARNELL, Lewis Richard (1856-1934)

St. Andrews, 1919-20 and 1924-25

Greek Hero Cults, 1921

The Attributes of God, 1925

The first series of lectures was concerned with the relationship between early hero cults and the religious practices of ancient Greece. The Attributes of God is a comparative study of ideas of deity current in pre-Christian religions. After introductory lectures on anthropomorphism, polytheism and monotheism, the tribal, national, political and moral attributes of God as revealed in early religions are discussed. Metaphysical aspects of the problem are treated in a closing lecture.

FARRER, Austin Marsden (1904-)

Edinburgh, 1956-57

The Freedom of the Will, 1958

Dr. Farrer describes this work as a "hand to hand fight with deterministic misconception". He discusses the problems of determinism and free will in the light of contemporary philosophy, and shows the necessity of freedom if ethics and theology are to be meaningful.

FINDLAY, John Niemayer See page 527

FLINT, Robert (1838-1907)

Edinburgh, 1907

The name of Robert Flint appears in the official list of Gifford lecturers; the lectures were not given owing to his illness, nor has any work been published.

FOWLER, William Warde (1847-1921)

Edinburgh, 1909-10

The Religious Experience of the Roman People, 1911

Warde Fowler's lectures provide an historical survey of Roman religion down to the time of Augustus. Natural theology plays little part in its development until the time of the Stoics, but Roman religion had its own particular contribution to make to western thought, described in the closing chapter.

FRASER, Alexander Campbell (1819-1914)

Edinburgh, 1894-96

The Philosophy of Theism, 1894, two volumes

Campbell Fraser's data for philosophy is provided by the self, the natural world and the concept of God. God is revealed in man and nature but only to faith. Fraser, the editor of Berkeley's works, was greatly influenced by his philosophy. Materialism finds its fulfilment in scepticism; idealism in theism. The problems of evil, miracle and human progress are discussed in the final section. A one-volume amended edition of the lectures was published in 1899.

FRAZER, James George (1854-1941)

(1) St. Andrews, 1911-13

The Belief in Immortality, 1913

This volume is an anthropological study of belief in immortality and the worship of the dead among primitive peoples, particularly among the Australian aborigines, the Torres Strait Islanders and the natives of New Guinea and Melanesia.

(2) Edinburgh, 1924-25

The Worship of Nature, 1926

A further anthropological study - of the worship of the Sky, the Earth and the Sun among ancient Aryan and non-Aryan peoples and in modern China, Japan, Africa and Indonesia and among the Indian tribes of north and south America. Frazer understands natural theology to be "the conception which man, without the aid of revelation, has formed to himself of the existence and nature of a God or gods", which explains his particular approach.

GILSON, Etienne (1884-)

Aberdeen, 1931-32

L'esprit de la philosophie medievale, 1932,

The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy, tr. A.H.C. Downes, 1936

Gilson finds in mediaeval thought "Christian Philosophy par excellence". Christian philosophy, like Christian art and literature, accepts the heritage of the past from all sources and makes its own synthesis. The thought of Augustine and Aquinas, Bonaventure and Duns Scotus is carefully explored as well as the work of lesser scholars.

GORE, Charles (1853-1932)

St. Andrews, 1929-30

The Philosophy of the Good Life, 1930

Bishop Gore gives an account of the idea of the good life as it is found in the thought of Zarathustra, Buddha and other Asiatic teachers, with chapters on Israel, Platonism and Jesus Christ. The later chapters interpret moral ideals as in in the various religious contexts. Gore expounds a rational faith based on the evidence of the moral consciousness of man.

GWATKIN, Henry Melvill (1844-1916)

Edinburgh, 1903-05

The Knowledge of God, Edinburgh, 1906 two volumes

The major part of this work, the contribution of a Church historian to the Gifford discussion, is an account of the developing ideas of God from primitive times, through Greek and Biblical thought, to the Christian era. The earlier lectures are concerned with possible ways of knowing God and the nature of revelation. Gwatkin traces the development of Christian thought from the time of the early church to his own day, giving particular attention to the influence of the Reformation.

HALDANE, John Scott (1860-1936)

Glasgow, 1927-28

The Sciences and Philosophy, 1929

J.S.Haldane criticises both mechanistic and vitalistic interpretations of the data provided by biology and psychology. Science only gives a partial account of our actual experience and brings us to the point where we require more than science. Philosophy criticises and clarifies the findings of science, and with science may perform the same service for theology. Haldane accepts a spiritual interpretation of the universe but puts a question mark against the "supernatural" elements in Christianity.

HALDANE, Richard Burdon (1856-1928)

St. Andrews, 1902-04

The Pathway to Reality, 1903 and 1904, two volumes

A metaphysical essay in Hegelian idealism. God is to be defined as Ultimate Reality and Ultimate Reality is Mind. In God's nature there is no distinction between Thought and Thinker. Man is separated from God by his finiteness, and it is his duty to overcome this separation. Religion consists in the consciousness of the potential unity of the finite self and the absolute self. Love achieves this unity. Haldane was greatly influenced by the thought of Goethe and Hegel.

HARDY, Alister See page 527

HEISENBERG, Werner (1901-)

St Andrews, 1955-56

Physics and Philosophy, 1959

The book is sub-titled The Revolution in Modern Science and deals in the main with Relativity and the Copenhagen interpretation of the Quantum Theory. Heisenberg and Niels Bohr, another Gifford lecturer with whom he worked, belong to the 'Copenhagen' school. A closing chapter deals with the role of modern physics in the present development of human thinking. Physics has given society nuclear weapons but it also has a more positive contribution to make to the unification of the world.

HENDEL, Charles William (1890-)

Glasgow, 1962-63

Dr. Charles Hendel, formerly Professor of Philosophy at Yale, lectured in 1962 on Politics : The Trial of a Pelagian Faith. The lectures have not yet been published.

HENSON, Herbert Hensley (1863-1947)

St. Andrews, 1935-36

Christian Morality, Natural, Developing, Final, Oxford, 1936

Bishop Hensley Henson claims that Christianity is the most highly developed of 'natural' religions, and that Christian morality is the climax or perfected version of natural morality. In the earlier lectures he traces the development of Christianity from Judaism, its attitude to the non-Christian world and its subsequent development in the history of the west. The later lectures are concerned with sexual morality, racial attitudes, the state, industrialism and current secular philosophies.

HOBSON, Ernest William (1850-1933)

Aberdeen, 1921-22

The Domain of Natural Science, Cambridge, 1923

Professor Hobson, a Pure Mathematician, discusses scientific law as manifested in mathematics, dynamics, thermodynamics and biology and in a concluding lecture examines the relevance of scientific findings to the cosmological and teleological arguments. Natural science cannot establish the complete rationality of the universe.

HOCKING, William Ernest (1873-)

Glasgow, 1937

W.E.Hocking lectured on Fact and Destiny; the lectures have not been published.

HODGES, Herbert Arthur (1905-)

Aberdeen, 1956-57

Professor Hodges lectured on The Logic of Religious Thinking, the first series entitled Its Customary Forms and Presuppositions, the second, Its Intellectual Status. The work is not yet published.

HODGSON, Leonard (1889-)

Glasgow, 1955-57

For Faith and Freedom (two volumes), Oxford, 1956 and 1957

In the first volume Dr. Hodgson discusses faith in the light of recent theological and philosophical discussion and surveys the contribution of Natural Theology to the problems of Creation, Freedom and Evil. The second volume is an outline of Christian Theology, justified by the conviction that as man has looked out on the world trying to make sense of it, the Christian faith has made the best sense.

INGE, William Ralph (1860-1954)

St. Andrews, 1917-18

The Philosophy of Plotinus, (two volumes), 1918

While the main theme of Dean Inge's lectures is the life and thought of the great philosopher of mysticism, Neoplatonism in general is discussed and its contribution to Christian thought assessed. Plotinus is of special interest to the natural theologian for he appears to have found, through what many would call 'natural religion', truths which the Christian recognises as a fundamental part of his faith.

JAEGER, Werner (1889-1961)

St. Andrews, 1936

The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers, Oxford, 1947

Natural theology is fundamentally a Greek invention and Werner Jaeger traces the contribution of the pre-Socratic thinkers to its growth. The thesis of the book is that Greek cosmological thought is more than an outgrowth of mysticism and Orphism and is to be seen as part of the rational approach to understanding the nature of reality.

JAMES, William (1842-1910)

Edinburgh, 1901-02

The Varieties of Religious Experience, 1902

This is probably the most widely known series of Gifford lectures. Psychology as applied to religious behaviour was in its infancy and this volume prepared the way for many other attempts to understand the nature of religion through psychology. The validity of religious experience is still a live issue and William James's insights remain relevant. His conclusions are given in a final chapter which emphasises the subjective value of religion without committing the author to statements concerning the objective nature of deity.

JONES, Henry (1852-1922)

Glasgow, 1920-21

A Faith that Enquires, 1922

Henry Jones regarded his book as a challenge to the dogmatism of the church. He appeals for "unsparing intellectual enquiry" in religious matters. He discusses the problems involved in applying scientific method to religious enquiry and considers the authority of moral consciousness and the relationship of the God of faith to the Absolute. The whole is a testimony to and an exposition of a personal faith which the author believes can stand the test of enquiring intelligence.

KNOX, Malcolm See page 527

KOHLER, Wolfgang (1887-)

Edinburgh, 1957-58

Dr. Kohler lectured on The Psychology of Values and Psychology and Physics; the lectures have not been published.

KRAUS, Oscar (1872-1942)

Edinburgh, 1940

Oscar Kraus, formerly Profesor of Philosophy in the University of Prague, lectured on New Meditations on Mind, God and His Creation; the lectures have not been published.

KRONER, Richard (1884-)

St. Andrews, 1939-40

The Primacy of Faith, New York, 1943

The relationship of knowledge and faith is discussed against the background of biblical and natural theology; Kant's doctrine of rational faith is fully explored. Neither science nor metaphysics can provide what faith gives. "God alone can assist man to attain pure being, but not by means of man's understanding or will." Richard Kroner was Professor of Philosophy at Kiel in the thirties but left Germany in 1938.

LAIRD, John (1887-1946)

Glasgow, 1939-40

Theism and Cosmology, 1940

Mind and Deity, 1941

The first volume is a careful study of the cosmological and teleological arguments and their implications. Laird is prepared to "examine the deistic part of theism" more closely on "a provisionally realistic basis". The second volume deals similarly with the ontological and moral arguments, neither of which Laird regards as finally satisfactory. But the indemonstrable need not be incredible and Laird finds theism more plausible than other conclusions.

LANCIANI, Rodolfo Amedeo (1846-1929)

St. Andrews, 1899-1901

New Tales of Old Rome, 1901

This is an archaeologist's account of then recent discoveries in and around Rome and the evidence they afford of religious rites and superstitions. Three concluding chapters deal respectively with Jewish, English and Scottish memorials to be found in Rome. Profusely illustrated, it was no doubt - and possibly still is - a useful guide to Roman antiquities.

LANG, Andrew (1844-1912)

St. Andrews, 1888-90

The Making of Religion, 1898

An anthropological study critical of the beliefs of Tylor and Spencer and supporting the view that primitive man originally believed in "high gods" and that animism replaced theism in the course of time.

LAURIE, Simon Somerville (1829-1909)

Edinburgh, 1905-06

Synthetica (Volume 2), 1906

Volume two of Synthetica takes the form of a series of meditations on God and man. God is immanent as feeling and as the Beautiful. He is also Reason, a God of the head as well as the heart. God is revealed to man as the Absolute synthesis. Man finds ethical fulfilment in God and society. Through suffering man shares the pain of God Himself. Death is the gateway to Immortality for the human Ego.

MACBEATH, Alexander (1888-)

St. Andrews, 1948-49

Experiments in Living, 1952

An essay in comparative ethics, concerned particularly with the moral and social life of the Trobriand Islanders, Crow Indians, Australian aborigines and a Bantu tribe.

MACKINNON, Donald MacKenzie See page 527

McLENNAN, Roderick Diarmid (1898-)

Edinburgh, 1959-60

Professor McLennan lectured on The Unity of Moral Experience; the lectures have not been published.

MACMURRAY, John (1891-)

Glasgow, 1953-54

The Self as Agent, 1957

Persons in Relation, 1961

Professor MacMurray's thesis is that a purely mechanical or organic interpretation of life is not fully adequate. Man is a person actively conscious of himself and other persons. "I do" is to replace "I think" and "It happens". Action is seen as the integration of knowledge and movement. In the second volume the structure of social relationships and the place of religion in human life are explored in the light of person to person relationships.

MARCEL, Gabriel (1889-)

Aberdeen, 1949-50

The Mystery of Being (two volumes), 1950 and 1951

Mystery for Marcel is not a problem to be solved but an experience to be explored. It is not to be understood through man's attitude to objects but through his response

to presence. The metaphysic of Being is to be understood through the experience of "we are" rather than "I think". Marcel is frequently described as a Christian existentialist but his thought is difficult to categorise. The Gifford lectures come nearest to a systematic exposition of his philosophy but even here he quotes freely from his plays and journals.

MARETT, Robert Ranulph (1866-1943)

St. Andrews, 1931-32

Faith, Hope and Charity in Primitive Religion, Oxford, 1932

Sacraments of Simple Folk, Oxford, 1933

Marett discusses the varying phases of fear and hope, lust and cruelty, curiosity and admiration, and shows how faith and charity have their early beginnings in primitive society. Religious activity among primitive folk is primarily emotional and the rational content small or non-existent. In the second series Marett describes the sacramental function of the common acts associated with life and death among primitive peoples.

MARITAIN, Jacques (1882-)

Aberdeen, 1940-42

Jacques Maritain did not lecture owing to war conditions. His appointment as French Ambassador to the Holy See prevented his acceptance of a further invitation after the war.

MITCHELL, William (1861-1962)

The Place of Minds in the World, 1933

This volume, representing the first series of lectures, is concerned with the functions of mind. Knowing is living as well as a means of living; it is the function of mind to be subject. The methods and categories of science and the development of modern physics are discussed. There is no application of the argument to theism, which application might have been made had the second volume on Powers of Mind appeared.

MORGAN, Conwy Lloyd (1852-1936)

St. Andrews, 1922-23

Emergent Evolution, 1923

Life, Mind and Spirit, 1926

Psychologist, biologist, disciple of Huxley (but differing from him on many issues), Lloyd Morgan used his Gifford lectures to propound his theory of Emergent Evolution, according to which deity is also emergent as in Alexander's system. Life, Mind and Spirit are emergent values and may be interpreted as spiritual progressions but not in terms of "supernatural" intervention, which would deny the naturalistic monistic interpretation on which Lloyd Morgan insists.

MULLER, Friedrich Max (1823-1900)

Glasgow, 1888-92

Natural Religion, 1889

Physical Religion, 1891

Anthropological Religion, 1892

Theosophy or Psychological Religion, 1893

Natural Religion is a general survey of the subject which Muller had expounded in Introduction to the Science of Religion (1873). Physical Religion is concerned in the main with the Rig veda and Indian religions. In Anthropological Religion Muller discusses religions in which ancestor worship and the survival of the human soul play a prominent part and in Theosophy he shows that as man progresses he reaches a religion in which the intellectual element plays a greater part. Muller uses the term "theosophy" to describe certain types of mysticism, in which divine wisdom and personal knowledge of God are stressed. In all he is concerned to show that man, through natural religion without the aid of miraculous revelation, can arrive at some of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity.

NIEBUHR, Reinhold (1892-)

Edinburgh, 1939

The Nature and Destiny of Man (two volumes), 1941 and 1943

The thesis of the first volume, Human Nature, is that the nature of man cannot properly be understood on the basis of either naturalistic or idealistic presuppositions. Only the Christian doctrine of Man and Sin gives an adequate account of the human dilemma. Other views of man's nature are examined and found wanting; the greater part of the book is devoted to Niebuhr's theology of human nature. The second volume, Human Destiny, offers Niebuhr's interpretation of history. For the Christian, he claims, the meaning of history can only be found beyond history.

NOCK, Arthur Darby (1902-)

Aberdeen, 1938-40

A.D. Nock lectured on Greek philosophy and religion under the general title, Hellenistic Religion - The Two Phases; the lectures have not been published.

PATERSON, William Paterson (1860-1939)

Glasgow, 1924-25

The Nature of Religion, 1925

In the light of the results of scientific studies of religion and the insights of psychology, Paterson examines varying concepts of the nature of religion and differing views as to what religion has to offer to man. The very existence of religion is deduced as evidence for the existence of God.

PATON, Herbert James (1887-)

St. Andrews, 1949-50

The Modern Predicament, 1955

In the last decades natural theology has been beset behind and before by positivist philosophers and biblical theologians, and the way of irrationalism in the form of mysticism or existentialism offers a ready escape. In the face of this "modern predicament" Paton reasserts the right and duty of the natural theologian to think dispassionately about religious questions, for religion must satisfy the mind as well as the heart.

PERRY, Ralph Barton (1876-1957)

Glasgow, 1947-48

Realms of Value, Cambridge, Mass., 1954

Anything has value, according to Perry, when it is the object of an interest, but it can only be such when its being expected leads to "actions looking to its realization or non-realization". Any field of personal and social events is a realm of value. The realms of culture, morals, politics, jurisprudence, economics and education are explored in these Gifford lectures. Perry accepts William James's Meliorism and declares that the office of religion is to proclaim the "proud purpose" of replacing evil with good and the good with the better.

PFLEIDERER, Otto (1839-1908)

Edinburgh, 1892-94

Philosophy and Development of Religion (two volumes), 1894

Volume One deals with the revelation of God through the natural order, the moral order and religious experience. Varying religious views of man and his world are discussed. The second volume provides an historical survey of Christian thought from its earliest beginnings to the Reformation.

POLANYI, Michael (1891-)

Aberdeen, 1951-52

Personal Knowledge, 1958

The first part of Michael Polanyi's book is concerned with the art of knowing. Knowledge is never merely impersonal or passive; knowing that bears on reality is active, personal and objective. The second and third parts adumbrate this thesis, and in the concluding section the relationship between knowing and being is discussed. The appearance of the human mind is seen as the ultimate stage in the awakening of the world. Polanyi successively occupied the chairs of Physical Chemistry and Social Studies in the University of Manchester.

PRICE, Henry Habberley (1899-)

Aberdeen, 1959-61

Professor Price lectured on The Nature of Belief; the lectures have not been published.

PRINGLE+PATTISON, Andrew Seth (1856-1931)

(1) Aberdeen, 1912-13

The Idea of God in the Light of Recent Philosophy, Oxford, 1920

The first series, after two introductory lectures on Hume and Kant, is concerned with typical nineteenth-century philosophical approaches - Idealism, Naturalism and Positivism. Early twentieth-century philosophy, exemplified by Bradley, Bosanquet, Bergson and McTaggart, is discussed in the second series.

(2) Edinburgh, 1922-23

The Idea of Immortality, Oxford, 1922

Studies in the Philosophy of Religion, Oxford, 1930

The first volume is concerned with the developing concept of immortality in primitive thought, among the Hebrews and the Greeks, in eastern religions and Christian belief, with a brief excursion into the realm of Body-Mind relationship and concluding reflections. The second volume, only six chapters of which were given as Gifford lectures, is a comparative and historical survey of early religious thought.

RAMSAY, William Mitchell (1851-1939)

Edinburgh, 1915-16

Asiatic Elements in Greek Civilisation, 1927

Ramsay investigated textual and archaeological evidence in the attempt to find the antecedents of Hellenism. Social and religious customs and ideas are traced to Crete and Asia Minor. Philosophical problems are not raised in this purely historical survey.

RAVEN, Charles Earle (1885-1964)

Edinburgh, 1950-52

Natural Religion and Christian Theology (two volumes),

Cambridge, 1953

Volume One, Science and Religion, follows the attempts of the scientist and the theologian to build a world picture from the Biblical period to the age of Darwin. Volume Two, Experience and Interpretation, is concerned with religious experience and its Christian interpretation.

RIDGEWAY, William (1853-1926)

Aberdeen, 1909-11

William Ridgeway's subject was The Evolution of the Religions of Ancient Greek and Rome; the lectures were not published.

ROSS, William David (1877-)

Aberdeen, 1935-36

Foundations of Ethics, Oxford, 1939

This is a restatement of a modern intuitionist theory of ethics first expounded by Sir David Ross in The Right and the Good (1930). The two concepts are carefully analysed, and in the course of the argument the views of a number of recent moral philosophers are discussed. The science of ethics is treated as self-authenticating without reference to theism.

ROYCE, Josiah (1855-1916)

Aberdeen, 1899-1900

The World and the Individual (two volumes), New York, 1900-01

Josiah Royce was in his time the best known representative of Idealism in America. These two volumes give a comprehensive statement of his particular version of Idealism. Man, a product of nature, is a finite being when viewed in the context of the physical world, but is nevertheless linked to the very life of God, who himself constitutes the unity of the universe. Religion gives a clue to the meaning of the universe and Idealism is the only satisfactory philosophy.

RUNCIMAN, Steven (1903-)

St. Andrews, 1960-62

Sir Steven Runciman lectured in the first session on the Orthodox Greek Church before the fall of Constantinople and in the second session dealt with the later history of the Greek Church under the Ottoman Turks. The lectures have not been published.

SAYCE, Archibald Henry (1845-1933)

Aberdeen, 1900-02

The Religions of Ancient Egypt and Babylonia, Edinburgh, 1902

A straightforward account by a distinguished Assyriologist of conceptions of deity held in ancient Egyptian and Babylonian religions, with some indications of the influence of Egyptian thought upon Christianity and of Babylonian thought upon Judaism.

SCHWEITZER, Albert (1875-1965)

Edinburgh, 1934

Albert Schweitzer lectured in French on The Problem of Natural Theology and Natural Ethics, posing the question, "To what ethical and religious knowledge can man's unaided reason attain?" The lectures have not been published.

SHERRINGTON, Charles Scott (1857-1952)

Edinburgh, 1937-38

Man on his Nature, Cambridge, 1940

Beginning with the speculations of the sixteenth-century Philosopher-physician, Jean Fernal, Sir Charles Sherrington examines the nature of man in the light of developments in scientific knowledge. No proof of God's existence is possible, but a study of nature can lead to the discovery of design and to a purely natural religion. Man's glory is to have discovered perhaps only for a moment "a harmony wherein he is a note".

SMITH, John Alexander (1863-1939)

Glasgow, 1928

J.A.Smith lectured on The Heritage of Idealism; the lectures have not been published.

SODERBLOM, Nathan (1866-1931)

Edinburgh, 1930-31

The Living God, 1933

Archbishop Soderblom of Upsala lectured on Indian and Iranian religions, the religion of Socrates and the incarnational religion of Christianity. The living God reveals himself in all religions and continues to reveal himself in history. The second series of lectures was not delivered. The volume contains a biographical introduction by Dr. Yngve Brilioth.

SORLEY, William Ritchie (1855-1935)

Aberdeen, 1914-15

Moral Values and the Idea of God, Cambridge, 1917

An exposition of theism from an idealist standpoint based on moral values. This imperfect world is necessary for man's moral development and moral values give meaning to an otherwise mechanical existence. Man's end however is not absorption into the Absolute; there must be further enterprise to satisfy his moral nature and this demands individual survival.

STIRLING, James Hutchison (1820-1909)

Edinburgh, 1888-90

Philosophy and Theology, Edinburgh, 1890

J.H.Stirling, the first Edinburgh lecturer, gave an historical survey of the theistic proofs in his first series of lectures. In the second series he showed how the proofs fared as a result of the thought of Hume, Kant and Darwin. The eleventh lecture, the first in the second series, is a fairly full account of a little book of lectures by Lord Gifford himself, which had been published posthumously.

STOKES, George Gabriel (1819-1903)

Edinburgh, 1891-93

Natural Theology (two volumes), 1891 and 1893

Sir George Stokes, physicist and mathematician, was the first scientist among the Gifford lecturers. He claimed the right to apply the scientific method of "hypothesis" to the truths of Christianity and presented evidence from evolution and from other fields of science to support his own Christian convictions. The Christian faith extends beyond natural theology and involves the admission of the supernatural; it does not contradict natural theology but fulfils it.

STOUT, George Frederick (1860-1944)

Edinburgh, 1919-21

Mind and Matter, Cambridge, 1931

God and Nature, Cambridge, 1952

Stout's first volume is concerned with the body-mind relationship. Having considered common sense views in an opening section, Stout goes on to find purely materialistic views unacceptable. After a discussion of Kantian philosophy he argues that Mind is fundamental in the Universe of Being and is not derivative from anything not mind. The second volume published posthumously some thirty years after the lectures further explores the concept of Universal Mind, which is finally to be described as God - the God of theism, not of pantheism.

TAYLOR, Alfred Edward (1869-1945)

St. Andrews, 1926-28

The Faith of a Moralist (two volumes), 1930

The subject matter of the first volume is sufficiently described in its sub-title, The Theological Implications of Morality. In the second volume, Natural Theology and the Positive Religions, Taylor deals with the historical, supernatural and miraculous elements in religion, the question of authority, problems arising from institutionalism and finally the relationship between faith and knowledge.

TEMPLE, William (1881-1944)

Glasgow, 1932-34

Nature, Man and God, 1934

Archbishop Temple suggested as a possible sub-title, A Study in Dialectical Realism. Starting from a realist view of the physical universe he found the existence of minds an inescapable conclusion. The reality behind the universe is Transcendent Mind which becomes immanent in man and nature and makes itself known to finite minds. There is however a hunger for Divine Revelation which natural theology cannot satisfy; it can discuss God but it cannot find him.

THOMSON, John Arthur (1861-1933)

St. Andrews, 1915-16

The System of Animate Nature (two volumes), 1920

The Realm of Organisms as it is is the sub-title of the first volume, in which Thomson traces the adaptiveness and purposiveness to be found in human and animal behaviour. The second volume, The Evolution of the Realm of Organisms, traces the progress of man, who is seen as the crown of nature. Disharmony is evident in the universe, but finally the scientific description of animate nature is not inconsistent with a religious interpretation.

TIELE, Cornelis Petrus (1830-1902)

Edinburgh, 1896-98

Elements of the Science of Religion (two volumes), 1897 & 1899

In his first series of lectures C.P.Tiele, Professor of the History and Philosophy of Religion in the University of Leyden, traced the development of religion from its earliest stages. The second series traced institutional developments and discussed the fundamental nature of religion. Science of Religion, for Tiele, is not simply an objective study of religion but a discipline which may lead man to a fuller grasp of the spirit - to real religion beyond the outward forms.

TILLICH, Paul (1886-1965)

Aberdeen, 1953-54

Systematic Theology (Volumes 2 and 3), 1957 and 1964

Tillich's two series of lectures Existence and the Christ and Life and the Spirit are embodied respectively in the second and third volumes of his Systematic Theology. The lectures do not appear in the form in which they were originally given but the substance is in the published work.

TOYNBEE, Arnold Joseph (1889-)

Edinburgh, 1952-53

An Historian's Approach to Religion, Oxford, 1956

Toynbee's work provides a fascinating commentary on the interplay of the religious and the secular in the history of the west. In part one, The Dawn of Higher Religions, man-worship is traced in the idolisation of the parochial community, which is superceded by the idolisation of the ecumenical community, which in turn gives place to the idolisation of religious institutions. Part two, Religion in a Westernizing World, traces the fortunes of religion in the west from the seventeenth century to the present, which is seen as a testing time for world religions.

TYLOR, Edward Burnett (1832-1917)

Aberdeen, 1889-91

Tylor, the author of Primitive Culture (1871), lectured on the beliefs and customs of savage peoples; the lectures were not published.

WALLACE, William (1844-97)

Glasgow, 1893-94

Lectures and Essays on Natural Theology and Ethics, 1898

William Wallace died as a result of a cycle accident before the lectures were revised for publication and they were edited (with a memoir) by Edward Caird. Wallace dealt with the rise of natural theology from Greek thought and in the later lectures with the inter-relationships of religion and morality. Other essays in moral philosophy are included.

WARD, James (1843-1925)

(1) Aberdeen, 1896-98

Naturalism and Agnosticism (two volumes), 1899

James Ward surveyed the mechanical theory of nature suggested by science, the implications of evolutionary theories and various types of psycho-physical parallelism. In a later section he refutes dualism and finally expounds his own particular form of spiritualistic monism. True reality is shown to be not mechanistic but a Realm of Ends.

(2) St. Andrews, 1907-10

The Realm of Ends, or Pluralism and Theism, Cambridge, 1911

James Ward followed up the theme of his Aberdeen lectures. In the first section Pluralism receives detailed attention and Hegel provides subject matter for two lectures. In the second part under the general heading of Theism, the idea of Creation, Freedom, the problem of evil, the future life and the relationship between faith and knowledge are discussed.

WATSON, John (1847-1939)

Glasgow, 1910-12

The Interpretation of Religious Experience (two volumes),
Glasgow, 1912

In his first volume Watson offers an historical survey of philosophical thought concerning religion from the earliest Greek ventures to those of Hegel. He gives special attention to Dante, Descartes, Spinoza, Locke, Berkeley, Hume and Kant. The second volume provides a constructive statement of Watson's own philosophy - a Spiritual Monism, and includes a critical assessment of opposing views.

WEBB, Clement Charles Julian (1865-1954)

Aberdeen, 1918-19

God and Personality, 1919

Divine Personality and Human Life, 1920

In his first series of lectures Clement Webb affirmed Personality in God, thus distinguishing God from the Absolute and Religion from Philosophy. The presence of personal relationships between man and God is the essence of religion. The second series was concerned with an examination of this relationship between God and man and the destiny of the individual. Eternal life is personal intercourse between man and God expressed in the relationship of love.

WEIZSACKER, Carl Friedrich von (1912-)

Glasgow, 1959-61

The Relevance of Science, 1964

Weizsacker traces the interaction of myth and science from earliest times to the present day and discusses the problems involved in regarding science as a pseudo-religion. Science has an important part to play but not as a religion. The second series of lectures were given under the title The Philosophy of Modern Physics; these lectures are not yet published.

WHITEHEAD, Alfred North (1861-1947)

Edinburgh, 1927-28

Process and Reality, Cambridge, 1929

Whitehead's lectures are described as an essay in speculative philosophy, which in turn is defined as "the endeavour to frame a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted." This work provides an outline of Whitehead's philosophy of Organism. God's primordial nature is completed by the derivation of his consequent nature from the temporal world. Individual creatures find their immortality in the everlasting being of God. The meaning of the world is to be found in God's adventure of Creation, whereby the many are finally understood as One.

WISDOM, John (1904-)

Aberdeen, 1948-50

John Wisdom lectured on The Mystery of the Transcendental and The Discovery of the Transcendental; the lectures have not been published.

WRIGHT, Georg Henrik von (1916-)

St. Andrews, 1958-60

The Varieties of Goodness, 1963

Von Wright tentatively describes his work as an "Inquiry into the Conceptual Foundations of Morals and Legislation". The published volume represents the second series of lectures, in which he discusses the various uses of the word "good", its moral sense, and the relationship of goodness to virtue and justice. The first series, originally entitled Norms, is to be published later.

Norm and Action was in fact published later in 1963.

It has little or no bearing upon the problems of natural theology.

Recent Additions to the foregoing alphabetical List

ARON, Raymond (-)

Aberdeen, 1964-66

Professor Aron of the University of Paris is lecturing on "Historical Consciousness in Thought and Action." The first series on "Understanding the Past" was given in 1965. The second series has not yet been given.

BUTTERFIELD, Herbert (1900-)

Glasgow, 1965-66

Professor Butterfield lectured on "Human Beliefs and the Development of Historical Writing." The second series will be delivered in 1966.

FINDLAY, John Niemayer (1903-)

St. Andrews, 1964-66

The Discipline of the Cave, 1966

Professor Findlay uses Plato's analogy of the Cave to suggest that the phenomena of this life cannot be properly understood without reference to something beyond the Cave. The influence of Hegel and Husserl is evident in the lectures, in which Professor Findlay expounds what he calls a teleological idealism. The second series of lectures is to be published under the title, The Transcendence of the Cave.

HARDY, Alister (1896-)

Aberdeen, 1963-65

Sir Alister Hardy's general subject was "Science, Natural History and Religion", the titles of the two series being: "The Living Stream: Natural Theology and Evolution," and "The Divine Flame: Towards a Natural History of Religion." The lectures are not yet published.

KNOX, Malcolm (-)

Aberdeen, 1966-68

The lectures have not yet been delivered and no prospectus has appeared.

MACKINNON, Donald MacKenzie (1913-)

Edinburgh, 1964-66

Professor McKinnon lectured in 1965 on "The Problem of Metaphysics." The second series is due in 1966.

APPENDIX FOURA Supplementary Bibliography(a) Lord Gifford

- Gifford, Adam Lectures Delivered on Various Occasions,
Frankfort, 1889
- Gifford, John Recollections of a Brother, Adam Gifford, one
of the Senators of the College of Justice in
Scotland under the title Lord Gifford,
Printed for the family, 1891

(b) Concerning the Gifford Lectures

- Davidson, W.L. Recent Theistic Discussion, Edinburgh, 1921
(A discussion of the lectures given up to 1921.)
- Jessop, T.E. A Bibliography of David Hume and of Scottish
Philosophy from Hutcheson to Balfour, 1938
(Contains a Gifford bibliography up to 1938.)

(c) The History of Natural Theology

- Caldecott, A. and Mackintosh, H.R. (Editors and Translators),
Selections from the Literature of Theism,
Edinburgh, 3rd edition, 1931
- Copleston, F. A History of Philosophy, (7v) 1951-62
- Gillispie, C.G. Genesis and Geology, New York, 1959
- Gilson, E. God and Philosophy, 1941
- .,. History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle
Ages, 1955
- Langmead Casserley, J.V. The Christian in Philosophy, 1949

- Macquarrie, J. Twentieth Century Religious Thought, 1963
 Metz, R. A Hundred Years of British Philosophy, 1950
 Rogers, A.K. A Student's History of Philosophy, New York, 1901
 Smart, N. Historical Selections in the Philosophy of Religion, 1962
 Webb, C.C.J. Studies in the History of Natural Theology,
 Oxford, 1915

(d) Recent Discussions of Natural Theology

- Baillie, John, Barth, Karl and Brunner, Emil, Natural Theology,
 comprising "Nature and Grace," by Professor Dr.
 Emil Brunner and the reply "No!" by Dr. Karl
 Barth, with an introduction by John Baillie,
 English Translation, 1946.
- Braithwaite, R.B. An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious
 Belief, Cambridge, 1955
- De Lubac, H. The Discovery of God, E.T., 1960
- Edwards, D.L.(Editor) The Honest to God Debate, 1963
- Ferre, F. Language, Logic and God, 1962
- Flew, A. and MacIntyre, A. (Editors) New Essays in Philosophical
 Theology, 1955
- Langmead Casserley, J.V. Apologetics and Evangelism, 1962
- Gornall, T. A Philosophy of God, 1962
- Lewis, H.D. Our Experience of God, 1959
 ,, Philosophy of Religion, 1965
- MacIntyre, A. (Editor) Metaphysical Beliefs, 1957
- MacKinnon, D.M. Borderlands of Theology, 1961
- McPherson, T. The Philosophy of Religion, 1965
- Maritain, J. Approaches to God, 1955
- Mascall, E.L. Words and Images, 1957
- Meynell, H. Sense, Nonsense and Christianity, 1964
- Mitchell, B. (Editor) Faith and Logic, 1957

- Ramsey, I.T. Religious Language, 1957
,, (Editor) Prospect for Metaphysics, 1961
- Robinson, J. Honest to God, 1963
- Sillem, E. Ways of Thinking about God, 1961
- Smart, N. Reasons and Faiths, 1958
,, Philosophers and Religious Truth, 1964
- Trethowan, I. An Essay in Christian Philosophy, 1954
- Vidler, A.R. (Editor) Soundings, 1962
- Woods, G.F. Theological Explanation, 1958